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Jawaharlal Nehru

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (November 14, 1889 - May 27, 1964) was a major political leader of the Congress Party, a pivotal figure in the Indian independence movement and the first Prime Minister of independent India.

He was also a key figure in international politics in the post-war period (in which he was considered the leader of third world interests) and patriarch of the Nehru-Gandhi family, one of the most influential forces in Indian politics. He is popularly referred to as Panditji (Scholar) and Pandit Nehru.

The son of the wealthy Indian barrister and politician Motilal Nehru, Nehru became a leader of the left-wing of the Indian National Congress at a remarkably young age. Rising to Congress President under the mentorship of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru was a charismatic, radical leader, advocating complete independence from the British Empire, and was eventually recognised as Gandhi's political heir. A life-long liberal intellectually, Nehru was also an advocate for Fabian socialism and the public sector as the means by which long-standing challenges of economic development could be addressed.

Serving as Congress President, Nehru raised the flag of independent India in New Delhi on August 15, 1947, and served as Prime Minister. His daughter Indira and grandson Rajiv would both also serve as Prime Minister and President of the Indian National Congress, as would Rajiv's wife Sonia. His long tenure was instrumental in shaping the traditions and structures of independent India.

EARLY LIFE

Jawaharlal Nehru was born in the city of Allahabad, situated along the banks of the Ganges River (now in the state of Uttar Pradesh). He was the eldest child of Swarup Rani, the wife of wealthy barrister Motilal Nehru. The Nehru family descended from Kashmiri heritage and belonged to the Saraswat Brahmin caste of Hindus. Training as a lawyer, Motilal had moved to Allahabad and developed a successful practise and had become active in India's largest political party, the Indian National Congress. Nehru and his sisters - Vijaya Lakshmi and Krishna - lived in a large mansion called Anand Bhavan and were raised with English customs, mannerisms and dress. While learning Hindi and Sanskrit, the Nehru children would be trained to converse fluently and regularly in English.

After being tutored at home and attending some of the most modern schools in India, Nehru travelled to England at the age of 15 to attend Harrow. Nicknamed "Joe" while there, he proceeded to study natural sciences at Trinity College, Cambridge before choosing to train as a barrister at the Inner Temple in London. Frequenting the theatres, museums and opera houses of London, he would spend his vacations travelling across Europe. Observers later described him as an elegant, charming young intellectual and socialite. Nehru also actively participated in the political activities of the Indian student community, growing increasingly attracted to socialism and liberalism, which were beginning to influence the politics and economies of Europe.

Upon his return to India, Nehru's marriage was arranged with Kamala Kaul. Married on February 8, 1916, Nehru was 27 and his bride was 17 years old, at the time. The first few years of their marriage were hampered by the cultural gulf between the anglicized Nehru and Kamala, who observed Hindu traditions and focused on family affairs. The following year Kamala gave birth to their only child, their daughter Indira Priyadarshini. Having made few attempts to establish himself in a legal practise, Nehru was immediately attracted to Indian political life, which at the time was emerging from divisions over World War I. The moderate and extremist factions of the Congress had reunited in its 1916 session in Lucknow, and Indian politicians had demanded

Home Rule and dominion status for India. Joining the Congress under the patronage of his father, Nehru grew increasingly disillusioned with the liberal and anglicized nature of Congress politicians, which included his father. Although frequently hailed as a future leader of the Congress and India, Nehru's political rise did not begin until the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on India's political arena.

YOUNG LEADER

Nehru was very strongly attracted to Gandhi's philosophy and leadership. Gandhi had led a successful rebellion on behalf of indentured Indian workers while a lawyer in South Africa. Upon his return to India, Gandhi organised the peasants and farmers of Champaran and Kheda in successful rebellions against oppressive tax policies levied by the British. Gandhi espoused what he termed as satyagraha - mass civil disobedience governed by ahimsa, or complete non-violence. A forceful exponent of Indian self-reliance, Gandhi's success electrified Indians, who had been divided in their approach to contesting British rule. Having met Gandhi and learning his ideas, Nehru assisted him during the Champaran agitation.

Following Gandhi's example, Nehru and his family abandoned their Western-style clothes, possessions and wealthy lifestyle. Wearing clothes spun out of khadi, Nehru emerged as one of the most energetic supporters of Gandhi. Under Gandhi's influence, Nehru began studying the Bhagavad Gita and practiced yoga throughout his life. He would increasingly look to Gandhi for advice and guidance in his personal life, and would spend a lot of time travelling and living with Gandhi. Nehru travelled across India delivering political speeches aimed at recruiting India's masses, especially its youth into the agitation launched in 1919 against the Rowlatt Acts and the Khilafat struggle. He spoke passionately and forcefully to encourage Hindu-Muslim unity, spread education and self-reliance and the need to eradicate social evils such as untouchability, poverty, ignorance and unemployment.

Emerging as a key orator and prominent organiser, Nehru became one of the most popular political leaders in northern

India, especially with the people of the United Provinces, Bihar and the Central Provinces. His youth and passion for social justice and equality attracted India's Muslims, women and other minorities.

Nehru's role grew especially important following the arrest of senior leaders such as Gandhi and his father, and he was also imprisoned along with his mother and sisters for many months. Alarmed by growing violence in the conduct of mass agitations, Gandhi suspended the struggle after the killing of 22 state policemen by a mob at Chauri Chaura on February 4, 1922. This sudden move disillusioned some, including Nehru's father Motilal, who joined the newly formed Swaraj Party in 1923. However, Nehru remained loyal to Gandhi and publicly supported him.

A lull in nationalist activities enabled Nehru to turn his attention to social causes and local government. In 1924, he was elected president of the municipal corporation of Allahabad, serving as the city's chief executive for two years. Nehru launched ambitious schemes to promote education, sanitation, expand water and electricity supply and reduce unemployment - his ideas and experience proved valuable to him when he would assume charge of India's government in 1947. Achieving some success, Nehru was dissatisfied and angered by the obstruction of British officials and corruption amongst civil servants. He resigned from his position within two years.

In the early part of the decade, his marriage and family life had suffered owing to the constant activity on his part and that of his father. Although facing domestic pressures and tensions in the absence of her husband, Kamala would increasingly travel with Nehru, address public meetings and seek to sponsor and encourage nationalist activities in her hometown. In the late 1920s, the initial marital gulf between the two disappeared and the couple grew closer to each other and their daughter. In 1926 Nehru took his wife and daughter to Europe so that Kamala could receive special medical care. The family travelled and lived in England, Switzerland, France and Germany. Continuing his political work, Nehru was deeply impressed by the rising currents of radical socialism in Europe, and delivered fervent speeches in condemnation of imperialism. On a visit to the Soviet Union,

Nehru was favourably impressed by the command economy, but grew critical of Stalin's totalitarianism.

CONGRESS PRESIDENT

In the 1920s, Nehru was elected president of the All India Trade Unions Congress. He and Subhash Chandra Bose had become the most prominent youth leaders, and both demanded outright political independence of India. In 1927, he became a member of the League against Imperialism created in Brussels. Nehru criticised the Nehru Report prepared by his father in 1928, which called for dominion status for India within the British Empire. The radicalism of Nehru and Bose would provoke intense debates during the 1928 Congress session in Guwahati. Arguing that India would deliver an ultimatum to the British and prepare for mass struggle, Nehru and Bose won the hearts of many young Indians. To resolve the issue, Gandhi said that the British would be given two years to grant India dominion status. If they did not, the Indian National Congress (INC) would launch a national struggle for full political independence. Nehru and Bose succeeded in reducing the statutory deadline to one year.

The failure of talks with the British caused the December 1929 session in Lahore to be held in an atmosphere charged with anti-Empire sentiment. Preparing for the declaration of independence, the AICC elected Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President at the encouragement of Gandhi. Nehru himself recalled that he was sensible of the fact that it was considered somewhat surprising:

> *"I have seldom felt quite so annoyed and humiliated... It is not that I was not sensible of the honour... But I did not come to it by the main entrance or even the side entrance: I appeared suddenly from a trap door and bewildered the audience into acceptance."*

On December 31, 1929 President Nehru hoisted the flag of independence before a massive public gathering along the banks of the Ravi River. The Congress would promulgate the Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) declaration on January 26, 1930. With the launching of the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Nehru travelled across Gujarat and other parts of the country participating and encouraging in the mass rebellion against the salt tax. Despite his

father's death in 1931, Nehru and his family remained at the forefront of the struggle. Arrested with his wife and sisters, Nehru was imprisoned for all but four months between 1931 and 1935. During that same period, however, his popularity grew enormously. According to John Gunther, Nehru was both "distrustful of it, while simultaneously unable to control being somewhat " exhilarated and impressed".

His family quickly chastened him with raillery; his wife and sisters, and even his small daughter, began to call him in the home the names he was given by the crowd. They would say, "Oh Jewel of India, what time is it?" or "Oh Embodiment of Sacrifice, please pass the bread."

Nehru was released by the British and he traveled with his family once again to Europe in 1935, where his ailing wife Kamala would remain bed-ridden. Torn between the freedom struggle and tending to his wife, Nehru would travel back and forth between India and Europe. Kamala Nehru died on February 28, 1936. Deeply saddened, Nehru nevertheless continued to maintain a hectic schedule. In her memory, he wore a fresh rose on his coat for the rest of his life.

His popularity continued to grow, and his personal discomfort with that popularity rose with it. In the November, 1937 issue of the Calcutta-based journal Modern Review, an article entitled 'The Rashtrapati' severely criticized him. The anonymous author acknowledged Nehru's initiative and innate drive but also pointed out glaring streaks of autocracy, saying that his character was marked by "intolerance of others and a certain contempt for the weak and inefficient". The author, who signed himself "Chanakya", added that Nehru's conceit was "already formidable", and worried that soon "Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar". It was not suspected at the time that Chanakya was Nehru himself. This publication is a significantly important example of autocritique.

Nehru had been re-elected Indian National Congress(INC) President in 1936, and had presided over its session in Lucknow. Here he participated in a fierce debate with Gandhi, Patel and other Congress leaders over the adoption of socialism as the official goal of the party. Younger socialists such as Jaya Prakash Narayan, Mridula Sarabhai, Narendra Dev and Asoka Mehta began to see

Nehru as leader of Congress socialists.[citation needed] Under their pressure, the Congress passed the Avadi Resolution proclaiming socialism as the model for India's future government. Nehru was re-elected the following year, and oversaw the Congress national campaign for the 1937 elections. Largely leaving political organisation work to others, Nehru travelled the length and breadth of the country, exhorting the masses on behalf of the Congress, which would win an outright majority in the central and most of the provincial legislatures. Although he did not contest elections himself, Nehru was seen by the national media as the leader of the Congress.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Assemblies were informed that the Viceroy had unilaterally declared war on the Axis on behalf of India, without consulting the people's representatives. Outraged at the viceroy's arbitrary decision, all elected Congressmen resigned from their offices at the instigation of Subhash Bose and Nehru. But even as Bose would call for an outright revolt and would proceed to seek the aid of Nazi Germany and Japan, Nehru remained sympathetic to the British cause. He joined Maulana Azad, Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari and Patel in offering Congress support for the war effort in return for a commitment from the British to grant independence after the war. In doing so, Nehru broke ranks with Gandhi, who had resisted in supporting war and remained suspicious of the British. The failure of negotiations and Britain's refusal to concede independence outraged the nationalist movement. Gandhi and Patel called for an all-out rebellion, a demand that was opposed by Rajagopalachari and resisted by Nehru and Azad. After intensive debates and heated discussions, the Congress leaders called for the British to Quit India - to transfer power to Indian hands immediately or face a mass rebellion. Despite his skepticism, Nehru travelled the country to exhort India's masses into rebellion. He was arrested with the entire Congress Working Committee on August 9, 1942 and transported to a maximum security prison at a fort in Ahmednagar. Here he remained incarcerated with his colleagues till June 1945. His daughter Indira and her husband Feroze Gandhi were also imprisoned for a few months. Nehru's first grandchild, Rajiv Gandhi was born in 1944.

After his release from prison at the end of the Second World War, Nehru immediately resumed his political work and toured through India preparing grounds for the elections that had been promised for 1946. In October 1945, with the decisions to carry on with the INA trials announced, Nehru was instrumental in announcing the formation of the INA Defence Committee for the defence of the officers of the Indian National Army who faced court Martial in Delhi. Nehru chaired the INA Defence Committee and the legal defence team, while at the same time carrying on with his political work.

INDIA'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER

Nehru and his colleagues had been released as the British Cabinet Mission arrived to propose plans for transfer of power. The Congress held a presidential election in the knowledge that its chosen leader would become India's head of government.

Once elected, Nehru headed an interim government, which was impaired by outbreaks of communal violence and political disorder, and the opposition of the Muslim League led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who were demanding a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. After failed bids to form coalitions, Nehru reluctantly supported the partition of India as per a plan released by the British on June 3, 1947. He would take office as the Prime Minister of India on August 15, and delivered his inaugural address titled "A Tryst With Destiny:"

> *"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."*

However, this period was marked with intense communal violence. This violence swept across the Punjab region, Delhi, Bengal and other parts of India. Nehru conducted joint

tours[citation needed] with Pakistani leaders to encourage peace and calm angry and disillusioned refugees. Nehru would work with Maulana Azad and other Muslim leaders to safeguard and encourage Muslims to remain in India. The violence of the time deeply affected Nehru, who called for a ceasefire[citation needed] and UN intervention to stop the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947. Fearing communal reprisals, Nehru also hesitated in supporting the annexation of Hyderabad State, and clashed with Patel on the Kashmir dispute and relations with Pakistan. Nehru asserted his own control over Kashmir policy while Patel objected to Nehru sidelining his Home Ministry's officials. Nehru felt offended by Patel's decision-making regarding the states' integration without consulting either him or the Cabinet. Patel asked Gandhi to relieve him of his obligation to serve. He knew that he lacked Nehru's youth and popularity, and believed that an open political battle would hurt India. After much personal deliberation and contrary to Patel's prediction, Gandhi on January 30, 1948 told Patel not to leave the Government, and to stay by Nehru's side in joint leadership. A free India, according to Gandhi, desperately needed both Patel and Nehru's joint leadership.

Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948. At Gandhi's wake, Nehru and Patel embraced each other and addressed the nation together. Despite working together, the two leaders would clash on various issues. Nehru declined Patel's counsel on sending assistance to Tibet in 1950 with the disputed entrance of the People's Republic of China and ejecting the Portuguese from Goa by military force.

When Nehru pressured Dr. Rajendra Prasad to decline a nomination to become the first President of India in 1950 in favour of Rajagopalachari, he thus angered the party, which felt Nehru was attempting to impose his will. Nehru sought Patel's help in winning the party over, but Patel declined, and Prasad was duly elected. When Nehru opposed the 1950 Congress presidential candidacy of Purushottam Das Tandon, a conservative Hindu leader, he endorsed Jivatram Kripalani and threatened to resign if Tandon was elected. Patel rejected Nehru's views and endorsed Tandon in Gujarat, in a disputed election where Kripalani received not one vote despite hailing from that state himself.

In the years following independence, Nehru frequently turned to his daughter Indira to look after him and manage his personal affairs. Following Patel's death in 1950, Nehru became the most popular and powerful Indian politician. Under his leadership, the Congress won an overwhelming majority in the elections of 1952, in which his son-in-law Feroze Gandhi was also elected. Indira moved into Nehru's official residence to attend to him, inadvertently estranging her husband, who would become a critic of Nehru's government. Nevertheless, Indira would virtually become Nehru's chief of staff and constant companion in his travels across India and the world.

ECONOMIC POLICIES

Nehru presided over the introduction of a modified, "Indian" version of state planning and control over the economy. Creating the Planning commission of India, Nehru drew up the first Five-Year Plan in 1951, which charted the government's investments in industries and agriculture. Increasing business and income taxes, Nehru envisaged a mixed economy in which the government would manage strategic industries such as mining, electricity and heavy industries, serving public interest and a check to private enterprise. Nehru pursued land redistribution and launched programmes to build irrigation canals, dams and spread the use of fertilizers to increase agricultural production. He also pioneered a series of community development programs aimed at spreading diverse cottage industries and increasing efficiency into rural India. While encouraging the construction of large dams, irrigation works and the generation of hydroelectricity, Nehru also launched India's programme to harness nuclear energy.

For most of Nehru's term as prime minister, India would continue to face serious food shortages despite progress and increases in agricultural production. Nehru's industrial policies encouraged the growth of diverse manufacturing and heavy industries, yet state planning, controls and regulations began to impair productivity, quality and profitability. Although the Indian economy enjoyed a steady rate of growth, chronic unemployment amidst entrenched poverty continued to plague the population. Nehru's popularity remained unaffected, and his government

succeeded in extending water and electricity supply, health care, roads and infrastructure to a large degree for India's vast rural population.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REFORM

Jawaharlal Nehru was a passionate advocate of education for India's children and youth, believing it essential for India's future progress. His government oversaw the establishment of many institutions of higher learning, including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management.

Nehru also outlined a commitment in his five-year plans to guarantee free and compulsory primary education to all of India's children.

For this purpose, Nehru oversaw the creation of mass village enrollment programmes and the construction of thousands of schools. Nehru also launched initiatives such as the provision of free milk and meals to children in order to fight malnutrition. Adult education centres, vocational and technical schools were also organised for adults, especially in the rural areas.

Under Nehru, the Indian Parliament enacted many changes to Hindu law to criminalize caste discrimination and increase the legal rights and social freedoms of women. A system of reservations in government services and educational institutions was created to eradicate the social inequalities and disadvantages faced by peoples of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Nehru also championed secularism and religious harmony, increasing the representation of minorities in government.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY

Although having promised in 1948 to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir under the auspices of the U.N., Nehru grew increasingly wary of the U.N. and declined to hold a plebiscite in 1953. He ordered the arrest of the Kashmiri politician Sheikh Abdullah, whom he had previously supported but now suspected of harbouring separatist ambitions; Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad replaced him. On the international scene, Nehru was a champion

of pacifism and a strong supporter of the United Nations. He pioneered the policy of non-alignment and co-founded the Non-Aligned Movement of nations professing neutrality between the rival blocs of nations led by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Recognising the People's Republic of China soon after its founding (while most of the Western bloc continued relations with the Republic of China), Nehru sought to establish warm and friendly relations with it despite the invasion of Tibet in 1950, and hoped to act as an intermediary to bridge the gulf and tensions between the communist states and the Western bloc. This policy of pacifism and appeasement with respect to China soon came unraveled when China annexed Aksai Chin, the region of Kashmir adjoining Tibet in 1962 that led to the Sino-Indian war.

Jawaharlal Nehru declined a United States offer for India to occupy a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council around 1953. Nehru instead suggested that the seat be given to China.

In an interview given to the BBC in 1998, George Fernandes, the then defence minister of India, revealed that the Coco Islands were part of India until they were donated to Burma by Nehru. Coco Islands are a pair of strategically important islands located across the 20 km Coco channel from the Indian North Andaman Island and about 300 km south of the Burmese mainland. The Burmese military junta leased the islands to the People's Republic of China in 1994, which promptly setup a signal intelligence gathering station and maritime army base on the islands to monitor Indian naval activity and project power in the Strait of Malacca region of the Bay of Bengal, one of the most sensitive shipping routes in the world.

Nehru was hailed by many for working to defuse global tensions and the threat of nuclear weapons. In 1956 he had criticised the joint invasion of the Suez Canal by the British, French and Israelis. Suspicion and distrust cooled relations between India and the U.S., which suspected Nehru of tactily supporting the Soviet Union. Accepting the arbitration of the UK and World Bank, Nehru signed the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 with Pakistani ruler Ayub Khan to resolve long-standing disputes about sharing the resources of the major rivers of the Punjab region.

FINAL YEARS

Mr. Nehru had led the Congress to a major victory in the 1957 elections, but his government was facing rising problems and criticism. Disillusioned by intra-party corruption and bickering, Nehru contemplated resigning but continued to serve. The election of his daughter Indira as Congress President in 1959 aroused criticism for alleged nepotism. Although the Pancha Sila (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) was the basis of the 1954 Sino-Indian treaty over Tibet, in later years, Nehru's foreign policy suffered through increasing Chinese antagonism over border disputes and Nehru's decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama. After years of failed negotiations, Nehru authorized the Indian Army to annex Goa from Portugal in 1961.See liberation of Goa. While increasing his popularity, Nehru received criticism for opting for military action.

In the 1962 elections, Nehru led the Congress to victory yet with a diminished majority. Opposition parties ranging from the right-wing Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Swatantra Party, socialists and the Communist Party of India performed well.

In a matter of months, the border disputes with China turned into open conflict. Nehru assumed that as former victims of imperialism (India being a colony itself) they shared a sense of solidarity, as expressed in the phrase "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai" (Indians and Chinese are brothers). He was dedicated to the ideals of brotherhood and solidarity among developing nations. Nehru, naively, did not believe that one fellow Socialist country would attack another; and in any event, he felt secure behind the impregnable wall of ice that is the Himalayas. Both proved to be severe miscalculations of China's intentions and military capabilities. Following reports of his intention to confront Chinese occupation of the disputed areas - summarised in a memorable statement that he had asked the Army to "throw them (Chinese) out" - China launched a pre-emptive attack.

In a matter of months, a Chinese invasion of northeastern India exposed the weaknesses of India's military as Chinese forces came as far as Assam. Widely criticised for his government's insufficient attention to defence, Nehru was forced to sack the defence minister Krishna Menon and accept U.S. military aid.

Nehru's health began declining steadily, and he was forced to spend months recuperating in Kashmir through 1963. Upon his return from Kashmir in May 1964, Nehru suffered a stroke and later a heart attack. He died in the early hours of May 27, 1964. Nehru was cremated in accordance with Hindu rites at the Shantivana on the banks of the Yamuna River, witnessed by hundreds of thousands of mourners who had flocked into the streets of Delhi and the cremation grounds.

LEGACY

As India's first Prime minister and external affairs minister, Jawaharlal Nehru played a major role in shaping modern India's government and political culture along with sound foreign policy. He is praised for creating a system providing universal primary education, reaching children in the farthest corners of rural India. Nehru's education policy is also credited for the development of world-class educational institutions such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institutes of Technology, the National Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management.

Nehru is credited for establishing a widespread system of affirmative action to provide equal opportunities and rights for India's ethnic groups, minorities, women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Nehru's passion for egalitarianism meant that he put the state to work to try and end widespread practices of discrimination against women and depressed classes, though with limited success in his lifetime.

COMMEMORATION

In his lifetime, Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed an iconic status in India and was widely admired across the world for his idealism and statesmanship. His birthday, November 14, is celebrated in India as Children's Day in recognition of his lifelong passion and work for the welfare, education and development of children and young people. Children across India are taught to remember him as Chacha Nehru (Uncle Nehru). Nehru remains a popular symbol of the Congress party which frequently celebrates his memory. Congress leaders and activists often emulate his style of clothing, especially the Gandhi cap, and his mannerisms. Nehru's ideals

and policies continue to shape the Congress party's manifesto and core political philosophy. An emotional attachment to his legacy was instrumental in the rise of his daughter Indira to leadership of the Congress party and the national government.

Many documentaries about Nehru's life have been produced. He has also been portrayed in fictionalised films. The canonical performance is probably that of Roshan Seth, who played him in Richard Attenborough's 1982 film Gandhi and again in Shyam Benegal's Bharat Ek Khoj, based on Nehru's own work. In Ketan Mehta's film Sardar, Nehru was portrayed by Benjamin Gilani. Nehru's personal preference for the sherwani ensured that it continues to be considered formal wear in North India today; aside from lending his name to a kind of cap, the Nehru jacket is named in his honour due to his preference for that style.

Numerous public institutions and memorials across India are dedicated to Nehru's memory. The Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi is among the most prestigious universities in India. The Jawaharlal Nehru Port near the city of Mumbai is a modern port and dock designed to handle a huge cargo and traffic load. Nehru's residence in Delhi is preserved as the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. The Nehru family homes at Anand Bhavan and Swaraj Bhavan are also preserved to commemorate Nehru and his family's legacy. In 1951, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

2

A Tryst with Destiny

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history, India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and grandeur of her success and failures. Through good and ill fortune alike, she has never lost sight of that quest, forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of misfortunes and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means, the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and poverty and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest men of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work, and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill-will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.

The appointed day has come -the day appointed by destiny- and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning-point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about.

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materializes. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!

We rejoice in that freedom, even though clouds surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems encompass us. But freedom brings responsibilities and burdens and we have to face them in the spirit of a free and disciplined people.

On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation, who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the tempest.

Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death.

We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good [or] ill fortune alike.

The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy.

And to India, our much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, we pay our reverent homage and we bind ourselves afresh to her service.

JAI HIND.

Nehru even during his life-time went through the spectrum of individual and collective reactions to his leadership, from being adored as a revolutionary and vibrant personification of the forward-looking spirit of India to being described as a pampered young man who accidentally acquired national leadership due to the influence of his father and the favouritism of Mahatma Gandhi. He has been admired as a leader of the freedom movements, as the founding father of institutional democracy in India and as the architect of India's policy in all its manifestations, being the longest serving prime minister of India (from 1946 to 1964).

It would be pertinent to evaluate Nehru as a leader and a statesman because of the decisive and over-arching role that he played in Indian history in the 20th century. Regardless of criticisms, he was one of the most influential leaders of our freedom struggle. He was a pioneering articulator of Asian resurgence and was an unusually idealistic advocate of conscience in international politics. India's parliamentary democracy, free judiciary and media, the apolitical civil servants and armed forces, the commitment to secularism, social justice and equality before law, all originated in the blue print for free India which he worked out.

Nehru had a profound belief in India's destiny as a moral and stabilizing force in inter-state relations. He had faith in the Indian people and an equally strong hope that their maturity and civilisational wisdom would ensure for India an important role in the world. His education in the West, and his exposure to the political movements of Europe in the first three decades of this century, combined with his eclectic sense of history, made him realise that science, technology and economic modernisation and development were essential pre-requisites to fulfill the vision of a free India that he had in mind and to which he devoted three-fourths of his life.

These ingredients and influences, cannot be denied in generic terms but in is necessary to assess Nehru through the prism of

India's realities today, and to judge him in the context of criticisms leveled against him as an individual and as a public figure.

This exercise should necessarily be an assessment of him as a leader of the freedom struggle, as a founding ideologue of the Indian Republic, as the prime minister, as an international statesman and as a leader beloved of the people of India, second only to Gandhi in this century. I can do no better than to recall two remarks made by senior members of the Congress over his role as leader of the freedom struggle.

Acharya Kripalani, speaking at a seminar of the Gandhi Vichar Parishad in Wardha in 1954, said Nehru became a prominent leader of the freedom struggle basically because of the colonial mindset of the Indians. "He is an Englishman in Indian clothing." So the respect for him. I was one of the audience to which this remark was made. Though we were very young, we did not accept this assessment. We attributed it to the breaking away of Jayaprakash Narayan and Kriplani from the Congress at the point of time.

The second view was expressed years later by former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao when I asked him how Nehru came to such prominence in the freedom struggle. He said Congressmen made him their leader because of their conviction that he was committed to the cause of freedom and to the service of the people of India. But he also reminded me that Nehru had worked his way up through municipal elections in Allahabad and through mass movements in Pratapgarh of Uttar Pradesh.

As the ideologue of the Indian Constitution and the Indian polity, Nehru's contributions cannot be denied. It is his implementation of the doctrine of secularism and his approach to harmonizing the diversities of India which seem flawed in retrospect. The basic reasoning of secularism which he put forward was valid -- that a plural, multi-religious, civil society like that of India's could remain harmonious and united only if it is underpinned by religious tolerance and separation of religion from politics. The flaw, however, was that he did not underline the fact that the secular ethos of Indian society was rooted in two factors. That Hindus constituted the majority of the people of the country and that Hindu ethos at the profoundest intellectual and spiritual levels believed deeply in religious tolerance and respect for other religions.

If the majority of people in India were not Hindus, India would not have been a secular country. Instead of emphasising this, Nehru put the Hindu majority somewhat on the defensive, predicating Indian secularism on certification by the minorities, that the majority is secular. This resulted in a certain defensiveness and self-conscious denial of their religious and cultural identity by the Hindu community, which has perhaps made secularism a surface phenomenon in India's socio-political processes.

Similarly, Nehru's decision to reorganise the states on the basis of languages, while being good-intentioned, perhaps germinated the seeds of the present centrifugal territorial demands, affecting the unity of our country. While he was the builder of democratic institutions and conventions, one has to acknowledge that he did not groom a second generation of leadership in the party or the country, nor did he show any awareness of the need for anchoring the Congress in a trained cadre of party workers. He presumed that the commitment and organisational cohesion of the Congress during the freedom struggle would continue which was not to be because the party in a freedom movement is always different from a party in power in terms of ethos and motivations.

It is fashionable now to criticise Nehru's economic policies. He is castigated for making the public sector occupy the commanding heights of Indian economy. He is criticised for not linking up with western market economies.

It has to be remembered that the Indian private sector did not have the resources and motivation to invest in infrastructural sectors of the economy which required long-term investments and gestation periods. More importantly, between 1947 and 1955, all his efforts to get the major western powers involved in infrastructural development did not get a positive response. It was in consequence of this predicament that he entrusted the responsibility of mobilising resources and channelling them to fundamental sectors of the Indian economy to the government and the public sector.

While the decisions that he took seem logical and relevant to those times, the question to be answered is whether he would have continued the same policies had he lived into the '80s. Whatever his faults, he was alert and sensitive to changing domestic and international situations. Who knows, he might have been an equally active participant in the process of economic liberalisation and modernisation?

As an international statesman and foreign minister, there is a questioning of his founding the Non-Aligned Movement and its relevance today. It is true that the movement has not been very effective in safeguarding the interests of its member countries, particularly India. Two facts have to be kept in mind while evaluating Nehru's adherence to the movement. First, he made a distinction between being "non-aligned" and being part of "the Non-Aligned Movement".

He believed in non-alignment as a guiding principle of India's foreign policy so that India is assured of having the freedom of choice in making decisions responsive to its national interests without being subject to external influences. He articulated apprehensions about being part of a movement which in itself could become a bloc of countries. It was Krishna Menon who ultimately persuaded him to make India join the movement, arguing that the parallel interests of the countries of the movement would increase their influence in international transactions.

He did not believe in the non-aligned movement as a dogma. He rightly believed in non-alignment (as distinct from neutrality) as a guiding principle of India's foreign and security policies. Nehru can certainly be faulted for his idealism and belief in the sanctity of international law and agreements, in the light of his decision to go to the United Nations on the Kashmir issue and his faith in morality and goodwill as effective principles in inter-state relations. It was only at the end of 1962 after the military debacle against China that he acknowledged this reality, but it was too late.

He can be blamed with Vallabhbhai Patel for the impatience which led to Partition about which Maulana Azad has written. In retrospect, Partition was good. It is preferable to India facing more profound centrifugal alienations than it is facing now.

Nehru was the beloved leader of his people. But when one intermeshes his individual persona with his public persona, one cannot but come to the conclusion that he was for the people, was committed to India's destiny being governed by the people but to a great extent was not "of the people". He was essentially a remote, aristocratic, glamorous and private person. Gandhi, Patel and Ambedkar were perhaps more immersed in the mass identity of Indians.

Regardless of the fault lines, Nehru remains the most important architect of free India. The words of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes come to mind here. "A great man represents a great ganglion in the nerves of society, or to vary the figure, at a strategic point in the campaign of history and his greatness consists in seizing that opportunity and being there at that particular strategic point."

The seven years he spent in England were a formative period in which he acquired a rational and skeptical outlook and sampled Fabian socialism and Irish nationalism, which added to his own patriotic dedication. He returned to India in 1912. Legal work and a comfortable life failed to satisfy his restless spirit: it was not law but politics that called him. He joined the Home Rule movement in 1917, but his real initiation into militant politics came two years later when Mohandas Gandhi launched his campaign against the Rowlatt Bills. There was much about Gandhi that puzzled and baffled young Nehru, but he saw in Gandhi's satyagraha and effective alternative to armchair politics and sporadic terrorism, between which Indian politics was oscillating. At first Nehru's father did not like the idea of his twenty-nine-year-old son plunging into an unconstitutional agitation, but both father and son cast in their lot with Gandhi at the crucial session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in September 1920. A year later they were jailed for six months. This was Jawaharlal's first prison term; in all he was to spend nine years in jail.

Despite intellectual and temperamental differences, Jawaharlal became a trusted lieutenant of Gandhi. He served as general secretary of the All India Congress Committee, whose office was located in the family house at Allahabad. While he was in Europe for the treatment of his ailing wife, Kamala in 1926-1927, Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities Against

Imperialism in Brussels and paid a brief visit to Moscow, which gave a radical edge to his politics. In December 1928, at the Calcutta session, he clashed with the Congress old guard on the issue of dominion status for India. A year later, he presided over the Lahore session, which declared complete independence and civil disobedience under Gandhi's leadership. Nehru was elected to the Congress presidency again in 1936, 1937, and 1946, and he came to occupy a position in the nationalist movement second only to that of Gandhi.

Passionately opposed to fascism, Nehru was eager for nationalist India to throw its full weight behind the Allied war effort. But he insisted that the British government recognize India's right to freedom. After the abortive Cripps Mission, he reluctantly fell in line with Gandhi's plans for the "Quit India" campaign and was imprisoned in August 1942. Released in 1945, he took a leading part in the negotiations that culminated in the emergence of the dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947.

Nehru was fifty-seven when he assumed office as prime minister of India. Although his entire life had been spent in opposition, he made an effortless transition from a political agitator to a statesman. His government coped successfully with formidable challenges: the disorders and mass exodus of minorities across the new border with Pakistan, the integration of 500-odd princely states into the Indian Union, the framing of a new constitution, and the establishment of the political and administrative infrastructure for a parliamentary democracy.

Nehru's position in the Congress Party and the government was unchallenged throughout his seventeen years of power, except perhaps during the first three years of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's term as the deputy prime minister. Nehru's aim, in his own words, was to convert India's economy into that of a modern state. He set up a Planning Commission, encouraged development of science and technology, and launched three successive five-year plans. His policies led to a sizable growth in agricultural and industrial production, but it was somewhat offset by an unprecedented increase in population.

Important as Nehru's influence was on domestic policy, it was decisive on foreign affairs. Long years of association with the

nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership had conditioned him against colonialism and militarism. He was also acutely conscious of the hazards of war in the thermonuclear age and refused to align India with either of the power blocs. Initially his independent stance put him out of court with both the United States and the Soviet Union. However, over time both countries increasingly appreciated his motives and aims. He played a constructive, mediatory role in bringing the Korean War to an end and in resolving other international crises, such as those over the Suez Canal and the Congo, offering India's services for conciliation and international policing. He contributed behind the scenes toward the solution of several other explosive issues, such as those of West Berlin, Austria, and Laos.

Nehru was unable to achieve a satisfactory equation with India's two major immediate neighbors, Pakistan and China. The Kashmir issue proved a stumbling block in reaching an accord with Pakistan, and the border dispute prevented a resolution with China. The Chinese invasion in 1962, which Nehru failed to anticipate, came as a great blow to him and probably hastened his death.

Nehru had the prescience to foresee the possibilities of liberalization in the post-Stalin Soviet Union and of the rift between the Soviet Union and China. He persevered, in the face of much skepticism and criticism, in his pleas for the admission of China to the United Nations, for détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, and for a more equitable economic relationship between the developing and the developed countries. He called for liquidation of colonialism in Asia and Africa and, with Tito and Nasser, was one of the chief architects of the nonaligned movement.

Nehru was also a writer of distinction. His writings were a by-product of his intense involvement in the Indian nationalist movement, and his major works, Glimpses of World History (1934), his Autobiography (1936), and The Discovery of India (1946), were actually written in prison.

In 1912, he attended the Bankipore Congress as a delegate, and became Secretary of the Home Rule League, Allahabad in 1919. In 1916 he had his first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi and

felt immensely inspired by him. He organised the first Kisan March in Pratapgarh District of Uttar Pradesh in 1920. He was twice imprisoned in connection with the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22.

Pt. Nehru became the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee in September 1923. He toured Italy, Switzerland, England, Belgium, Germany and Russia in 1926. In Belgium, he attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels as an official delegate of the Indian National Congress. He also attended the tenth anniversary celebrations of the October Socialist Revolution in Moscow in 1927. Earlier, in 1926, at the Madras Congress, Nehru had been instrumental in committing the Congress to the goal of Independence. While leading a procession against the Simon commission, he was lathi-charged in Lucknow in 1928. On August 29, 1928 he attended the All-Party Congress and was one of the signatories to the Nehru Report on Indian Constitutional Reform, named after his father Shri Motilal Nehru. The same year, he also founded the 'Independence for India League', which advocated complete severance of the British connection with India, and became its General Secretary.

In 1929, Pt. Nehru was elected President of the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress, where complete independence for the country was adopted as the goal. He was imprisoned several times during 1930-35 in connection with the Salt Satyagraha and other movements launched by the Congress. He completed his 'Autobiography' in Almora Jail on February 14, 1935. After release, he flew to Switzerland to see his ailing wife and visited London in February-March, 1936. He also visited Spain in July 1938, when the country was in the throws of Civil War. Just before the court-break of the Second World War, he visited China too.

On October 31, 1940 Pt. Nehru was arrested for offering individual Satyagraha to protest against India's forced participation in war. He was released along with the other leaders in December 1941. On August 7, 1942 Pt. Nehru moved the historic 'Quit India' resolution at the A.I.C.C. session in Bombay. On August 8,1942 he was arrested along with other leaders and taken to Ahmednagar Fort. This was his longest and also his last detention. In all, he suffered imprisonment nine times. After his release in January

1945, he organized legal defence for those officers and men of the INA charged with treason. In March 1946, Pt. Nehru toured South East Asia. He was elected President of the Congress for the fourth time on July 6, 1946 and again for three more terms from 1951 to 1954.

Nehru-Khan-Gandhi Dynasty: Jawaharlal Nehru was the first prime minister of modern India, and he ruled the country from 1947 to 1964. He was born on 14th November 1889, to Motilal and Swarup Rani Nehru. The family belonged to a Kashmiri Brahmin tribe called 'Pandit.'

Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, became prime minister of India in 1966. Mrs. Gandhi was born on November 19, 1917 to Jawaharlal and Kamala Nehru. She was named Indira Priyadarshini Nehru. She fell in love and decided to marry Feroze Khan, a family friend. Feroze Khan's father, Nawab Khan, was a Muslim, and mother was a Persian Muslim. Jawaharlal Nehru did not approve of the inter-caste marriage for political reasons (see http://www.asiasource.org/ society/indiragandhi.cfm). If Indira Nehru were to marry a Muslim she would loose the possibility of becoming the heir to the future Nehru dynasty. At this juncture, according to one story, Mahatma Gandhi intervened and adopted Feroze Khan, gave him his last name (family name/ caste name) and got the name of Feroz Khan changed to Feroz Gandhi by an affidavit in England. Thus, Feroze Khan became Feroze Gandhi. Though Mahatma belonged to Bania/Gandhi caste (a business tribe) the proposal was acceptable to Nehru for political reasons. Indira Nehru married Feroze (Khan) Gandhi in 1942 and became Indira Gandhi, which helped her politically as daughter of Nehru (the first Prime Minister of the Indian Union) and daughter-in-law of Gandhi (the father of the nation) securing her place in the future Nehru-Gandhi dynasty (based on swordoftruth.com). Another story, according to Mr. Arvind Lavakare in a personal communication to me, is that Feroz had a Parsi father whose surname was "GHANDI" not "GANDHI". That was made clear by an advertisement in a major English newspaper of Allahabad. It was Mahatma Gandhi who suggested to Nehru that Feroze's surname be spelt as "GANDHI" instead of the original "GHANDI". An RSS columnist wrote that "Ghandi's"

mother was a Muslim, and since an offspring takes on the religion of its mother, Feroz ought to be considered a Muslim.

Indira Gandhi ruled the country from 1966 to 1984, except for a short period from 1977 to 1980.

Rajiv (Khan) Gandhi was born to Indira (Khan) Gandhi and Feroze (Khan) Gandhi. He converted to Christianity to marry Catholic Italian Sonia Miano (according to swordoftruth.com). He became prime minister in 1984 after Indira was assassinated by her own bodyguards. He ruled the country for 5 years from 1984 to 1989. The Nehru- (Khan)-Gandhi dynasty ended as Sonia, declined to accept the power, after Rajiv was assassinated in 1991. (The non-charismatic non-leaders of Congress (I) party handed over the reins of the party to reluctant Sonia, who now leads the Congress party and soon will lead the Indian Union).

The Nehru-Khan-Gandhi dynasty and the veneration and worship of Catholic Italian Sonia Miano (Khan) Gandhi by the Congress party as well as Indian (both Hindus and Muslims) masses throughout India can be considered as great examples of Indian secularism.

The Nehru-Khan-Gandhi dynasty, revived by Sonia Gandhi, swept back to power with vengeance in 2004 elections after a brief vacation of about 15 years. Sonia Gandhi, who was born in Italy and married into the dynasty, begged her husband to stay out of politics and was drawn into it herself only when the party was in dire need of leadership. A new generation of Gandhis arrives to save ailing party from disaster at the polls. Sonia Gandhi (55) inducted her son Rahul (34) and daghter Priyanka (33) into politics and they actively participated and won in the recent elections. A calcified, out-of-touch, visionless and nepotistic dynasty is poised once again to lead and the dynasty rule continues in the world's largest democracy, albeit with fresh and young Indo-Italian genes having Brahmin-Christian-Muslim-Parsi blood with charming faces and charisma which no other Indian can claim. Sonia Gandhi's rise from a small-town in postwar Italy to modern India is a story of love, death and dynasty, culminating in the most sensational victory of an Italian middle class woman ever to become the kingmaker in the Indian Union of a billion people. She will run the country from behind scenes as she installs Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister of the Indian Union, to avert a brewing foreigner-crisis and save the country.

"The world's greatest statesman"

Jawaharlal Nehru died on the 27th of May 1964 of a Cerebral Haemorrhage followed immediately by a heart attack. He was succeeded by Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Home Minister of the Government of India, as Prime Minister.

Here in Sri Lanka, the 28th of May, 1964 - day of Nehru's cremation on the Banks of the river Yamuna - was declared a Public and Bank holiday and all schools in the country, remained closed as a mark of respect to the departed Indian leader. In her condolence message to the then President of India, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, at that time, stated: "I am deeply shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Prime Minister Nehru. By his death, the world has lost one of the greatest statesmen and the whole of Asia grieves the loss of its foremost leader, dedicated to the cause of peace".

"Mr. Nehru was a sincere friend of Ceylon and had won the hearts of the people of my country on his visits here, by his charm, sincerity, simplicity, humanity and courage".

Accompanied by her Permanent Secretary, N. Q. Dias, brother Dr. Seevali Ratwatte and son Anura, Mrs. Bandaranaike flew to New Delhi to attend Nehru's funeral.

Dudley Senanayake, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament (1964) and President of the United National Party, issued this statement on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's death:

"I am sorely grieved at the passing away of the greatest public man the world has known. The combination of his culture, erudition and services to humanity, was a rare one. The world today mourns the passing away of the outstanding champion of the democratic way of life. His loss is not a loss for India alone but a loss to the whole of humanity and as for Ceylon, it is a loss of a special friend".

Dr. N. M. Perera, Leader of the then LSSP, told the press that "Premier Nehru's death was a great calamity for the world in

general and Asia in particular". Pieter Keuneman, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ceylon said: "This is a sad news. India has lost a great patriot and a distinguished leader, Ceylon a good friend, Asia an outstanding statesman and the world, a staunch champion of peace".

A. Aziz, President of the Workers' Democratic Congress issued this statement: "In the death of Pandit Nehru India has lost a great leader, the Muslims and other minorities of India, a great friend, the Afro-Asian countries, a great fighter and the world, a great force for peace".

> *"The twentieth century has brought into prominence a long line of persons who have liberated the colonial countries. Of this line, Pandit Nehru was the life-blood. With humility, he served the people. He led the forces of freedom with dignity. There was great love and affection for him even in the minds of his opponents. Generations to come will enjoy the fragrance of his work for peaceful purposes".*

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a frequent visitor to Sri Lanka. He first came here in 1931 with his wife Kamala and daughter, Indira. This was followed by visits in 1939, 1954, 1957, and 1959 and for the last time in 1962 - two years prior to his death.

Nehru's official trips to Sri Lanka in 1957 and 1962 were significant as they were in connection with his participation at Anuradhapura, in the final observance of the 2,500th Anniversary of the Buddha's passing away and handing over to the Government of Sri Lanka the Ayurvedic Research Centre at Nawinna, respectively. Whenever he came to Sri Lanka, he never failed to visit the Samadhi Statue of the Buddha at Anuradhapura. Although Nehru was not a follower of any religion, he tried hard to adjust himself according to the teachings of the Buddha. The Indian national emblem is the Dharma Chakra or Wheel of Law.

In 1940, Philip Gunawardena and former President, J. R. Jayewardene attended the Ramgarh Session of the Indian National Congress. Philip was no stranger to Nehru, as the latter had known him in England. Of J. R. Jayewardene, Nehru told reporters at the end of the Session: "I was impressed with both Jayewardene and his plan for the modernization of the Ceylon National

Congress. His views on freedom and progress are very similar to ours".

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Nehru had been the best of friends. They had shared many ideals in common.

Nehru was one of the articulate India leaders to be involved in his country's freedom struggle. He was jailed by the British on nine occasions. His longest imprisonment - from 08th August 1942 to 15th June 1945 - was in the Ahmednagar Fort Jail. During the period of incarceration, Nehru was engaged in gardening, reading and writing books like the "Autobiography", "Glimpses of World History", and the Magnum Opus, "Discovery of India". Not only is there a tremendous demand for these books in all English speaking countries but they have also been translated into several languages.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a dreamer, visionary. His father, Motilal Nehru, was worldly-visioned. Jawaharlal Nehru had not been and could never become a votary of Mammon - a schemer for wealth. He was a high bred man in the highest and noblest sense of the word. Bitterness and cynicism were not known to him. All his life was consecrated to the service of the down trodden masses of India. He was the first in India to give the clarion call: "Roti, Kapada aur Makaan" - food, clothing and shelter - for his people. Before his death, Nehru had the most satisfaction of bringing some of the conceptions of his early years, to fruition. Finally, Motilal Nehru got round to his son's way of thinking and plunged into the freedom struggle.

Nerhu, the product of Harrow and Cambridge University described himself as "a queer mixture of East and West". His countrymen called him "Bharat Bhusan" - Jewel of India - while one of his biographers and one-time Editor of the Times of Ceylon, Frank Moraes, refers to him as "The Lonely Eagle". A Brahmin by birth, he never displayed any religious impulse. He was upright, tolerant and unswerving in his devotion to truth. He fought hard to establish Secularism in India.

Two people in India influenced Nehru during his formative years. One was Mrs. Annie Besant, the Theosophist and the other Ferdinand T. Brooks, the part - Irish, part - French, private tutor,

Both had opened up new vistas for Nehru. The death of Mr. Brooks, under tragic circumstances, caused Nehru untold anguish. While Nehru was growing up in Ananda Bahavan, his father's mansion, he had an insatiable appetite for reading. He began with children's books and transferred his interest to the writings, of Lewis Carrol, Rudyard Kipling, Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Connan Doyle, Mark Twain, Daphne Du Maurier etc. He also developed a taste for English poetry by British and American poets.

Nehru corresponded regularly with his contemporaries like Prof. Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Betrand Russel, Leonard Woolf and Thomas Mann. He also made it a point to look up these scientists, litterateurs and philosophers, during his trips to U.S.A., Britain and European countries.

Nehru attached great importance to physical exercises. He was a lover and promoter of Yoga, was interested in mountaineering, horse riding, swimming, cricket and tennis. On games, he writes: "I feel no game is Indian or foreign. There is no patriotism in insisting on playing a certain game and no other. At the same time, there should be no insistence on playing only foreign games".

Nehru had a deep love of the countryside and of its toiling peasantry. He was an impassioned lover of nature - a gazer into silent pools, sun-flushed clouds and mountains. As much as he adored children, he cared for birds and animals as they gave him immense pleasure. In fact, he had a collection of pets like the Himalayan Pandas, Peacocks, Parrots, Doves and Tiger cubs, in his spacious garden with its numerous flowering plants - the rose dominating. He wrote once: "Life would become dull and colourless if we had not these magnificent animals and birds to look at and play with".

The Gandhi Cap, staff and the rose-bud - "Talisman of hope and grace" - became a part of Nehru. He had a failing. He was quick-tempered. When the crowds attending his meetings turned unruly, he did not hesitate to wield his staff to control them. This is the moment the security personnel assigned to him dreaded most, as they could not restrain Nehru. Should his colleagues seated on the dais become inattentive, Nehru was known to throw

pillows at them? He has an explanation for these outbursts of temper: "If I get angry sometimes, I calm down quickly, for my anger is not with the individual but due to some incident. When the incident passes off, my anger also vanishes".

The following are some of the accolades showered on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while he was alive.

* "In bravery, he is not to be surpassed. Who can excel him in the love of his country? He is pure as the crystal; he is truthful beyond suspicion. He is a knight sans peur, sans reproach" - Mahatma Gandhi , 1929.
* "Jawaharlal is the Rituraj representing the season of youth and triumphant joy of an invincible spirit of fight and uncompromising loyalty to the cause of freedom" - Rabindranath Tagore, 1949
* "This man has overcome two of the greatest failings in human nature - he knows neither fear nor hatred". Sir Winston Churchil, 1949.
* "More than any other leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, has given expression to man's yearning for peace. In his pursuit of a world free from war, he has served all humanity" Lyndon B. Johnson, 1961.
* " Mr. Nehru is a great statesmen, steadfast champion of the cause of peace, and Governor of a great and friendly nation". Dr. Thomas Mann (Nobel Laureate) 1929 Memorable utterances
* "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time has come when we shall redeem our pledge. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take a pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity".On 14th August 1947 - When India gained Independence.
* "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved Leader, Bapu, the father of the Nation, is no more".On 30th January 1948 - When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated.
* "The ages roll by and the Buddha seems not so far away after all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to

run away from the struggle but calm eyed, to face it and to see in life ever greater opportunities for growth and advancement".

LAST WILL

"When I die, I should like my body to be cremated. If in a foreign country, my body should be cremated and my ashes sent to Allahabad. A small handful of these ashes should be thrown into the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. "My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned.

I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Yamuna Rivers ever since my childhood and as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. The Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. "And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from the past completely.

"I am proud of that great inheritance that has been and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it and as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance, I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shore.

"The major portion of my ashes should, however, be disposed of otherwise. I want these to be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India".

FREEDOM FIGHTER AND FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

"We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open." These words define the life and outlook of one of the great leaders of independent India.

Jawaharlal Nehru came into the world in Allahâbâd, India, in the year 1889, on November fourteenth. His parents were Motilal and Swarup Rani Nehru-his father was a wealthy lawyer who took care of not only his own family, but also his brother's widow and seven children. For the majority of his education Nehru studied in Britain, and in 1905 he went to the Harrow School; later on he attended the Trinity College at the University of Cambridge. During his earlier years of schooling, Nehru read constantly and studied a wide variety of subjects.

After studying at Trinity College, Nehru went on to study law at the Inner Temple in London, a profession which he took back to India and practiced for about seven years.

During this time in India, Nehru met and married his wife, Kamala Kaul, and one year later, in 1917 they had a daughter they named Indira. Two years later, Nehru joined the Indian National Congress, where he soon became a leader-during this time he began to help India gain its independence from England.

When Nehru worked for the Indian National Congress, Mohandas Gandhi became the organization's leader. Over the years, Nehru and Gandhi developed a strong relationship. Both fought for their country's freedom, though they did not always agree about the direction in which they wished India to grow.

Because Nehru led several civil disobedience campaigns, he spent a total of about ten years in prison over the span of twenty-seven years starting in 1920. Civil disobedience campaigns usually meant defying the government by refusing to obey certain laws, and these demonstrations generally took place in a nonviolent way. Like his mentor Gandhi, Nehru often followed the Biblical principal of Luke 6:29: "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.

If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic." In spite of this perspective, he remained an agnostic

throughout his life. His indifference to religion displays itself in his own words: "Nor am I greatly interested in the after life, in what happens after death.

I find the problems of this life sufficiently absorbing to fill my mind…It is the Tao, the path to be followed and the way of life that interests me; how to understand life, not to reject it but to accept it, to confirm it and to improve it."

During this time period, Nehru became the president of the Indian National Congress four different times, the first time being in the year 1929. Also throughout his years in prison, Nehru wrote a few books, Toward Freedom, The Discovery of India, and Glimpses of World History, which became quite popular in several areas of the world.

By the end of World War II, Nehru had almost served his last sentences in prison. In 1947, two years after the end of World War II, Nehru became the prime minister of India. While he served as prime minister, Nehru served as foreign minister as well. Nehru worked hard to improve his country, and slowly but surely the agricultural production increased and the economy grew.

As prime minister during the Cold War in the 1950s, Nehru urged his countrymen to remain neutral in foreign matters. Earlier in his career he disagreed with and spoke against aligned nations and military forces.

Still following his desire for peace, Nehru also opposed nuclear testing of any kind. However, at one point of his political career, Nehru was accused of deserting his policy of peace and neutralization.

This happened over a disagreement with Pakistan concerning the states of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistani troops invaded an area of Kashmir and Nehru wanted to keep it a part of India, so he sent Indian troops to assert India's claim over Kashmir-this went against Nehru's peace policy. Only a few years later, China took control over some land considered both China and India's land. In 1962, China and India fought in the Himalayas, where the Indian troops were beaten. Since China continued to occupy the land, Nehru felt forced to call for help from the American military-going against his nonalignment campaign.

In January of 1964, Nehru suffered from a stroke. Ever since the affair with China his health had begun to fade, and in May that same year he passed away.

Though he no longer lives, Nehru is still fondly remembered by many of his countrymen. He fought long and hard to gain India's independence, even spending time in prison for his efforts. In India today, Nehru's birthday, November fourteenth, is celebrated as Children's Day because of Nehru's love for children. For twenty-three years after his death, Nehru's descendents served India as prime minister-first his daughter and then his grandson. He definitely lived up to his own words: "Life is like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you represents determinism; the way you play it is free will."

3

Pandit Nehru and the Unity of the Oppressed People of South Africa

The historic role of Gandhiji has overshadowed the crucial role of Pandit Nehru and others in encouraging and promoting the unity of the Indians in South Africa with the African majority in the common struggle against racism, and in organising international support for the struggle.

Perhaps the first political activity of Jawaharlal Nehru after return from England as a barrister was to join the campaign against the recruitment of indentured labour for Fiji and South Africa, and to throw himself into the fund-raising campaign, launched by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in support of Gandhiji's Satyagraha in South Africa. That was in 1912 - the year when the African National Congress was founded.

BRUSSELS CONGRESS

At the Brussels Congress against Imperialism, February 10-15, 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru met the South African delegation which consisted of Josiah T. Gumede, President of the ANC; J.A. La Guma, a Coloured leader of the Communist Party; and D. Colraine of the South African Congress of Trade Unions. The three jointly drafted the resolution on South Africa which was adopted by the Congress. Later that year, Nehru, Gumede and La Guma were guests at the tenth anniversary celebrations of the October revolution in Moscow.

Pandit Nehru, in his report to the Indian National Congress on the Brussels Congress, noted with pleasure that the South

African delegates worked together. "In these days of race hatred in South Africa and the ill-treatment of Indians," he wrote, "it was pleasing to hear the representative of the white workers giving expression to the most advanced opinions on the equality of races and of workers of all races."

He added in a further report:

"The South African delegates have undertaken to form a branch of the League (against Imperialism) in South Africa in collaboration with the advanced wing of the white workers, the African workers, the African (National) Congress and the South African Indian Congress. This branch will specially work against all colour legislation and discrimination. So far there has not been much cooperation between these different organisations and each one of them has had to fight its battle singly. The white workers have of course not only not helped but have been the partisans of the colour discrimination policy. It will therefore be a great gain if the League succeeds in bringing about some cooperation and specially in associating at least the advanced white workers with the oppressed races in South Africa. A recent agreement between the Government of South Africa and India has apparently been approved in India. I am unable to express an opinion on it, though it does not seem to me to go very far. But in any event it would be foolish to imagine that the troubles of Indian settlers in South Africa are over and the help of the other communities should be very welcome."

The plans of the South African delegates at Brussels for unity in the struggle in South Africa did not come to fruition for many years.

Mr. Gumede was, in fact, forced to leave the presidency of the African National Congress in 1930, because of the opposition of chiefs, who exercised considerable influence in the organisation at that time.

NON-EUROPEAN UNITED FRONT

But very significant developments were taking place in South Africa towards unity in the struggle. While Indian traders and some professionals in the leadership of the Indian Congresses

were always compromising with the racist regime and seeking only some mitigation of discrimination, a new generation of Indians, born and raised in South Africa, sought nothing less than full equality. They were active in the trade union movement where they cooperated with African and other workers.

In the thirties, many of them were influenced by Marxism. A Young "Liberal" Study Group in Durban became a forum where radical Indians and Africans met to discuss the common problem of the elimination of racism.

A Non-European United Front was formed at a conference in Cape Town on April 25, 1939, attended by representatives of 45 organisations, "for the cooperation of Native, Indian and Coloured races in the struggle against the colour bar in South Africa."

It was led by Mrs. Zainunisa (Cissie) Gool, daughter of Dr. Abdulla Abdurahman, and wife of Dr. A.H. Gool, a former President of the South African Indian Congress. Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo and Dr. H.A. Naidoo were among several Indians in the leadership of this Front.

Understanding and support for this movement grew rather slowly in India since the "moderates" in the South African Indian Congress, rather than the young radicals, had access to Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders in India.

Gandhiji's Reservations Concerning a United Front in South Africa

At the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in June 1939, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, then head of the Foreign Department of the Congress, moved an amendment to the resolution on the problems of Indians in South Africa urging them "to join hands with other Non-Europeans to form a front to oppose the segregation policy." Gandhiji pointed out that the amendment does not belong in the resolution which concerned violations of undertakings by the South African Government on the rights of the Indian community. The amendment was then withdrawn at the request of Pandit Nehru.

Gandhiji's subsequent statement, that the South African regime's policy of segregation of Indians had nothing to do with

the policy concerning the Africans, embarrassed young Indian leaders in the Transvaal who were preparing for resistance against racist oppression and espoused unity with the African majority. It provoked considerable criticism in India.

Even Sir Sayed Raza Ali, former Indian Agent-General in South Africa, said in a statement that "the All India Congress Committee made a serious blunder by deleting from the resolution the passage supporting the Non-European front."

> *"Mahatmaji cannot be unaware of the fact that segregation as a policy was first enforced against the Bantu race. The trouble is that Mahatmaji's knowledge is quarter of a century old...*
>
> *"I am afraid that Mahatma Gandhi has done a great deal of harm to our people."*

Replying to Sir Sayed, Gandhiji wrote in the Harijan:

"I have carefully read Sir Raza Ali's condemnation of my advice to Indians in South Africa not to embark upon a non-European Front. My advice may be bad on merits, but does not become bad because I have been absent from South Africa for a quarter of a century. I have no doubts about the soundness of my advice. However much one may sympathise with the Bantus, Indians cannot make common cause with them.

"I doubt if the Bantus themselves will, as a class, countenance any such move. They can only damage and complicate their cause by mixing it up with Indians; as Indians would damage theirs by such mixture. But neither the All India Congress Committee resolution, nor my advice need deter Indians from forming a Non-European Front, if they are sure thereby of winning their freedom. Indeed had they thought it beneficial or possible, they would have formed it long ago."

Gandhiji had not been aware of the trends towards unity in South Africa. His attitude represented no lack of regard for the rights and aspirations of the African people. He had declared in an interview with the Reverend S. Tema of the African National Congress of South Africa, at the beginning of that year:

"The Indians are a microscopic minority... You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your

inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races."

It is to the credit of Gandhiji that he was to revise his views in the light of further developments.

In 1946, when a delegation of Indians from South Africa, led by Sorabjee Rustomjee, met him to seek his support and advice for a mass passive resistance campaign against the Ghetto Act, Gandhiji told them - echoing Nehru - to associate Africans with the struggle.

"The slogan today," he said, "is no longer merely 'Asia for the Asiatics' or 'Africa for the Africans' but the unity of all the oppressed races of the earth." He lent full support to Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, leaders of the passive resistance.

Next year, when Dr. Dadoo and Dr. Naicker visited India, Gandhiji held lengthy discussions with them and gave them a message in which he said:

"Political cooperation among all the exploited races in South Africa can only result in mutual good if wisely directed."

NEHRU'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Nehru, meanwhile, had significant influence on the thinking of young militants in South Africa. His writings were avidly read by Indians as well as Africans as testified by the moving letter sent by Nelson Mandela from prison when he received the Nehru Award for International Understanding.

India's complaint to the United Nations on the treatment of Indians in South Africa was taken up soon after Jawaharlal Nehru became head of the Interim Government in September 1946. The Indian delegation took care to ensure that India's espousal of the rights of people of Indian origin was in the context of opposition to all racial discrimination. India helped to secure support for the freedom movement from governments as well as world public opinion. The India League in London set up a South Africa Committee to promote solidarity with that movement. In 1947, the Indian Government was inclined, at the request of Dr. Dadoo and Dr. Naicker, to propose United Nations sanctions against South Africa. But the strong support received by the Smuts regime from the Western Powers with the beginning of the "Cold War" and the problems during the transition of India to independence, made that impracticable. In fact, India was unable to obtain a two-thirds majority even for a mild resolution of censure of South Africa. A resolution on sanctions had to await an appeal by the ANC in 1958 and the Sharpeville massacre of 1960.

In 1952, however, India was able, with the support of other Asian and Arab States, to place the whole problem of apartheid on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly.

The struggle and sacrifice of the Indians in South Africa, and the actions of the Indian Government under the leadership of Nehru, persuaded African militants to overcome their hesitations about multi-racial unity and build a united democratic front.

Jawaharlal Nehru was always responsive to requests from the leaders of the movement in South Africa.

In 1955, when India secured the exclusion of South Africa from invitations to the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, ANC wished to send Moses Kotane and Moulvi Cachalia as observers to the Conference. It approached Pandit Nehru for assistance: he offered not only to take them with him but to introduce them to all the leaders at the Conference.

In 1960, when Oliver Tambo and Dr. Yusuf Dadoo escaped from South Africa, he provided them urgently with Indian travel documents and transport from Dar es Salaam to London. He met them soon after and took initiatives to secure the exclusion of South Africa from the Commonwealth the next year.

While exhorting Indians abroad to identify with the legitimate aspirations of the indigenous people, he educated Indian public opinion to recognise that the problem of Indians in South Africa was inseparable from the struggle of the African people. He said in a speech in Rajya Sabha on December 15, 1958:

"The question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa has really merged into bigger questions where not only Indians are affected but the whole African population along with... any other people who happen to go to South Africa and who do not

belong to the European or American countries." He said in the Lok Sabha on March 28, 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre:

"The people of Indian descent, as we well know, have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and suffering and we have resented that. But we must remember that the African people have to put up with something infinitely more, and that, therefore, our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there."

By then, the movement in South Africa had made tremendous strides in forging the unity of the oppressed people, as well as democratic whites, which Nehru had envisaged in 1927. He had himself made a significant contribution, as a national leader and as head of government, to promoting that unity in struggle.

4

Nehru's Role in the Freedom Movement of India

Nehru's Nationalism and his role in the Freedom Movement are closely inter-related, since it was the nature of Nehru's Nationalist ideas that dictated his course of action in the freedom movement of India.

Nehru's Nationalism: Nehru's nationalism was not one of mindless jingoism. He was able to reach a common ground between an erudite internationalism and a very keen understanding of the Indian condition. Nehru's nationalism was marked by a fiery pride in the heritage of the country. But he was willing to temper this pride with his readings and his rationalist views that he received from his Western education in the West.

Jawaharlal Nehru's role in the freedom movement of India has probably not received as much historical attention as it deserves. That is, of course no surprise, as Jawaharlal Nehru's astounding success as a statesman who ushered in a new era of international relations through the formation of the NAM, and his stature as the first prime minister of independent India often adumbrate his position as a significant figure in the freedom movement of India. With his charm, highly impressive educational background, and selfless service to the nation, Nehru presented the face of a new and active India to thousands of Indians who looked up to him as a role model and a guide.

Early Years of Nehru in the Freedom Movement of India: Jawaharlal Nehru was born into politics. His father Motilal Nehru was a veteran Congressman and committed to the cause of India's

freedom for a very long time. Nehru spent much of his educational years in England studying first at Harrow and then at Trinity College, Cambridge. However, the freedom of India was always on his mind. It was therefore no surprise that after his return from the British shores in 1912, the job of a lawyer was the last of Nehru's priorities. As a student he already felt himself closely attached to the cause India's freedom, and had his sympathies with the Extremist leaders of Congress. After his return, he involved himself directly into the political scenario of the country.

However, Nehru was still comparatively without a firm direction in these early years, not sure which path was the right path that would lead towards India's freedom. His father's moderate ideologies and elitist way of life disturbed him, as he thought him, like many other Congressmen of his generation, to be much dissociated from the ground realities of the land and the lives of the common people of India. He also realized that the direct application of Socialist measures would not suit India's socio-economic profile. It was at that time that he found a direction in the mode of civil resistance as preached by Gandhi. Gandhi's success in Champaran and Ahmedabad renewed and established his belief in Satyagraha. He was not slow to adopt the cultural aspects of Satyagraha as well. He read the Indian scriptures of India, and dressed in home-spun clothes becoming a staunch Gandhian in all senses. Motilal and his entire family adopted the Gandhian way of life. Nehru traveled across India, and was warmly received by the masses. This filled him with a renewed sense of self-confidence. It was time he decided to whole-heartedly commit himself to the cause of Indian freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Non-Cooperation Movement: The first big involvement of Jawaharlal Nehru came at the onset of the non-cooperation movement in 1920. Nehru joined in whole-heartedly in this Satyagraha based movement that stormed India. Nehru was arrested on charges of anti-governmental activities and was released a few months later. In the rift formed within the Congress following the sudden closure of the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, Nehru remained loyal to Gandhi's camp and denied to join the Swaraj Party formed by Motilal Nehru and CR Das. After his release, Nehru's fame as

a dynamic Congress leader was well-established. He soon became the President of the Allahabad Congress Committee in 1923. However, towards the end of the decade, Nehru grew increasingly impatient with the pacifist nature of the senior Congressman. Along with Subhas Chandra Bose, Nehru was intent on complete freedom and believed in giving an ultimatum to the British Government to grant India dominion status. The senior leaders were bent on a slower and more patient approach. The Calcutta Congress of 1928 brought the rift into the open. Jawaharlal openly decried the Nehru Commission framed by Motilal Nehru, and it needed the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi to persuade Nehru to abandon his fiery stance of more direct action.

Nehru and the Civil Disobedience Movement: The Lahore Congress of 1929 was monumental in the political career of Nehru as well as the history of India's freedom struggle. Nehru was elected the president of Congress for the first time at a young age of forty. He used the platform of the Lahore conference to declare the goal of complete freedom or Purna Swaraj. The Civil Disobedience movement was formally launched after the Lahore Congress, and Nehru whole heartedly plunged himself in the non-violent protests and picketing that took the nation by storm. Nehru was arrested again in 1930, beginning the second and the longest phase of his prison stays. On his release, he formed the Socialist party within the Congress and insisted on more stern and immediate measures to realize the goal of India's freedom.

Nehru and the last days of Indian Freedom Struggle: The Government of India Act of 1935 called for nation-wide elections. Nehru campaigned vigorously for Congress, although he himself did not contest directly in the elections. With Gandhi concentrating on the spiritual development of his followers and gradually dissociating himself from direct political action, the stature of Nehru within the Congress ranks was now more than ever. He became the Congress President in the consecutive years of 1936 and 1937. By 1938, the rift in Congress was clear. With Bose and Gandhi forming the two feuding camps, Nehru was once more faced with a political dilemma. However, he decided to side with Gandhi and his methods. Bose resigned as the Congress president, and Nehru's status in the Congress reached a height previously

unattained. This year started a new phase in Nehru's career, especially after his denial to come to a compromise with the Muslim League.

With the clouds of World War II looming large in the horizon, Nehru's skill in international relations would be tested once more. Nehru did not support Bose's policy of siding with the Axis forces, and intended to extend support to the Allies. In the mean time, the Second Round Table conference failed and Gandhi launched the Quit India movement in 1942. Nehru was arrested and was released only in 1945. By the time the World War II was over and the new Labor Government of Britain seemed willing to grant India its long deserved freedom. However, the British Government wanted to adopt a policy of waiting and watching the result of the general elections of 1945.

Nehru was once again at the center of activities. He was arrested. His refusal to comply with Jinnah's claims made partition inevitable, as Jinnah called for direct action. Although his fight for Indian freedom stood on the verge of success, Nehru knew his work was far from over. He had to build a new India and had to guide the nascent economy towards success.

> *"His sympathy and understanding of the problems of Africa were a great source of courage to all who have been engaged in the struggle for the liberation and unity of Africa." -President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, in a broadcast on the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru*

> *"In the upsurge of anti-colonial and freedom struggles that swept through Asia and Africa in the postwar period, there could hardly be a liberation movement or national leader who was not influenced one way or another by the thoughts, activities and example of Pandit Nehru and the All India Congress. If I may presume to look back on my own political education and upbringing, I find that my own ideas were influenced by his experience." - Nelson Mandela, in letter from prison to India, August 3, 1980*

Whenever Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of Africa, it was with the passion of a historian who revolted at the long martyrdom of the people of that continent, the faith of a leader of a national liberation

struggle in the ultimate triumph of all oppressed peoples, and the commitment of an internationalist to assist other peoples in their efforts for emancipation. There was not the slightest trace of condescension or paternalism, but respect for the culture of the African peoples and confidence in their resurgence. Africa, to him, was not a remote continent but a neighbour across the seas, "for the sea both separates and connects." (Nehru and Africa, page 38).

He espoused African freedom during India`s own struggle for independence. Hardly had he become head of the Interim Government on September 1, 1946, that he began to exhort Asia and the world to help Africa.

He told the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947: "We of Asia have a special responsibility to the people of Africa. We must help them to take their rightful place in the human family." At the conclusion of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, he felt compelled to point out:

> *"Everything else pales into insignificnce when I think of the infinite tragey of Africa ever since the days when millions of Africans were carried away as galleyslaves to America and elsewhere, half of them dying in the galleys. We must accept responsibility for it, all of us, even though we ourselves were not directly involved."*

> *"Even now," he continued, "the tragedy of Africa is greater than that of any other continent, whether it is racial or political. It is up to Asia to help Africa to the best of her ability because we are sister continents." (Speech at concluding session on April 24, 1955).*

He told the Seminar on Problems of Portuguese Colonies in New Delhi on October 20, 1961:

> *"My heart goes out to what is heppening in Africa. I think that the agony of the African continent throughout history has been such that it has not been equalled anywhere. It is terrible, and I think the whole world owes it to the African people not to hinder them, but to help them in freedom in every way." (Nehru and Africa, page 36).*

He saw to it that India did its utmost to promote African freedom and play a leading role on behalf of Africa in the United Nations and other fora until newly-independent African nations could take over.

He rejoiced at the march of freedom in Africa by the early 1960`s and the formation of the Organization of African Unity. He said on August 12, 1963:

> *"... perhaps the most exciting thing that is happening in the twentieth century is the awakening of Africa...*
>
> *"It is, I think, a major event in history and, what is more, it is going to play an ever-growing part in the coming years. We in India have naturally welcomed it." (Nehru and Africa, page 37)*

Africa, moreover, was very much in his mind as he sought to promote a "peace zone" shielded from the cold war, and build a concert of non-aligned nations to secure the total abolition of colonialism and promote a world without arms and war. The decision of the African States in 1963, to join the Movement of Non-aligned Countries en bloc, making Africa the one continent that is totally non-aligned, was in a sense the best tribute to the labours of Pandit Nehru.

HERITAGE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Nehru`s concern with racialism and colonialism in Africa and his feeling of solidarity with the African people has its roots in his innate humanism, his experience in the Indian freedom struggle and his intimate association with Mahatma Gandhi.

Until the 1920`s Indian interest in Africa had centred around the position of Indian settlers in southern and eastern Africa. Tens of thousands of Indians had been recruited, after the abolition of African slavery in the nineteenth century, to work under semi-slave conditions as indentured labourers in plantations, mines and railways in South Africa, the Carbbean and the Pacific. Africans and Indians thus shared in oppression. By the end of the century, however, some of the Indian labourers who completed their indenture, and the traders who followed them, advanced in economically. Concerned at competition from them, European

settlers in South Africa enacted a series of measures designed to dispossess and deport the "free" Indians. The Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa from 1906 to 1914, for the rights and honour of Indians, fired Indian imagination and the first political activity of Jawaharlal Nehru was to raise funds for the resisters in South Africa in 1912.

His interest widened to encompass the entire continent of Africa, and a global view of its struggles, when he represented the Indian National Congress at the International Congress against Imperialism, held in Brussels in 1927, and met several African leaders. He also became familiar with the developments in South Africa and warmly welcomed the agreement among the South African delegates at the conference to promote cooperation among Africans, Indians and radical whites in the struggle against racism.

In a memorandum on "A Foreign Policy for India" , sent to the Indian Congress later that year, he suggested that Indians in Africa "should cooperate with the Africans and help them as far as possible and not claim a special position for themselves which is denied to the indigenous inhabitants of the country." (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 2, page 362).

He maintained contact with several leaders of the African freedom movements, especially in London, and with the Pan African movement. The Pan African Congresses began to support the Indian demand for complete iodependence while the Indian national movement expressed its full sympathy for African aspirations.

In 1936, while passing through Rome on way to India, Nehru rejected approaches for a meeting with the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, because of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. Instead, he organized nation-wide demonstrations in India to denounce the aggression, and declared in his presidential address to the Congress that year:

"In Abyssinia bloody and cruel war has already gone on for many months, and we have watched anew how hungry and predatory imperialism behaves in its mad search for colonial domains. We have watched also with admiration the brave fight of the Ethiopians for their freedom against heavy odds... Their

struggle is something more than a local struggle. It is one of the first effective checks by an African people on an advancing imperialism..." (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 7, p.194).

At the same time, fascist measures in South Africa aroused resistance among Africans and Indians. A new generation of Indian leaders, led by Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, challenged the compromising leadership of the Indian Congresses, prepared for militabnt resistance to racist measures and sought unity with the African majiority in a common struggle for freedom. Nehru`s strong support to the militants helped promote a non-European united front and joint campaigns against racist measures.

Meanwhile, the progress and ideology of the national movement in India, the largest colony struggling against the mightiest imperial power, was followed with keen interest by Africans. The writings of Pandit Nehru were avidly read by African intellectuals. His international outlook and his stress that national freedom must benefit the common people, appealed to the emergent African movements in which the youth and trade unions played a crucial role. Nowehere was this as striking as in South Africa, with one of the oldest national movements struggling against the heaviest odds. To quote Nelson Mandela:

"While at university and engrossed in student politics, I, for the first time, became familiar with the name of this famous man. In the `forties, for the first time I read one of his books, The Unity of India. It made an indelible impression on my mind and ever since then I procured, read and treasured any one of his works that became available."

Indians in Africa

Discrimination against Indians in South Africa was one of the first concerns of Pandit Nehru when he became head of the Interim Government in 1946. The way he approached the issue, so unlike leaders of other governments, demonstrated most clearly his respect for African rights and interests.

Indians in South Africa had launched a passive resistance movement in June 1946 in protest against the "Ghetto Act". Public feeling in India was so intense that even the Viceroy`s government

was obliged to impose a trade embargo against South Africa, recall its High Commissioner from South Africa and lodge a complaint with the United Nations.

While pressing for action by the United Nations for the removal of discriminatory measures against Indians, Pandit Nehru constantly drew attention to the broader context of racism in South Africa and beyond, and exhorted Indians in Africa to cooperate with the Africans. He wrote in a policy decision on September 15, 1946:

"While India must necessarily aim at protecting the interests and honour of her nationals abroad,... we do not seek any special privileges against the inhabitants of the countries concerned.

This would apply specially to African countries where the inhabitants are relatively backward and have been exploited in the past by others, including to some extent even Indians. Our objective should be to help in the rapid progress of these African territories towards political and economic freedom." (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 1, page 446).

In a message to Indians in South Africa on the eve of the formation of the Interim Government, he said:

"The struggle in South Africa is, however, not merely an Indian issue... It concerns ultimately the Africans who have suffered so much by racial discrimination and suppression. ... Therefore, the Indians in South Africa should help in every way and cooperate with the Africans." (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 1, page 437).

He said in a further message to Africa in May 1947:

"Indians who live in Africa must always remember that they are the guests of the Africans and that they may not do anything which might interefere with the progress of the Africans towards freedom. They must help Africans to attain their goal, and must cooperate with them in every way for their mutual advantage. We do not want any Indians to go abroad to exploit the people of any other country...

"We want to build up one world where freedom is universal, and there is equality of opportunity between races and peoples.

"I send my good wishes to the people of Africa and my fellow-countrymen in Africa, and I hope that in the difficult days to come they will co-operate together to realise the great ideals we have before us." (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 3, page 329).

Nehru`s outlook was shared by Mahatma Gandhi who had spent 21 years of his life in South Africa and maintained a continuing interest in the continent. Gandhiji believed, as did Nehru, that freedom of India should be a means for promoting freedom of all oppressed people. He stressed that Africa belonged to the African people and that if any rights of Indians there conflicted with those of oppressed Africans, they should forego those rights. When white hooligans attacked Indian passive resisters in South Africa in 1946, he declared that he would not shed a tear if all the Indian resisters were wiped out, for they would show the way to the Africans and vindicate the honour of India. (Collected Works, Vol. 84, pp. 422-423).

India`s complaint to the United Nations provided no relief to the Indians in South Africa, but served to internationalize the issue of racism in South Africa, and encourage united struggle by the South African people. In 1952, when the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress jointly launched the "Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws", India took the lead, in cooperation with other Asian and Arab States, to seize the United Nations of the broader question of apartheid and took all appropriate action to rally support to the African National Congress. Pandit Nehru declared that the revolt of all the oppressed people had overtaken the Indian question and "it is right that it should be so." (Letter to Chief Ministers, 26 August 1952).

He said in a speech in the Lok Sabha on March 28, 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre:

"The people of Indian descent in South Africa, as we well know, have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and suffering and we have resented that. But we must remember that the African people have to put up with something infinitely more, and that, therefore, our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and ken there."

Two years later, India withdrew its request for separate consideration of its complaint to the United Nations and threw its entire weight behind action against apartheid.

In Kenya, as in South Africa, Pandit Nehru tried to promote African-Indian unity for freedom. In 1952, when the Mau Mau rebellion and brutal mass repirsals by the authorities created a grave situation, he appealed to the Indians in Kenya to stand by the Africans in the hour of their need and resist maneuvres by the authorities to set Indians against the Africans. He strongly denounced the repression and did not hesitate to criticize Indian leaders who were timid.

Support for Africa`s Freedom and Advancement

Almost from the day he became head of the Interim Government, and even before India attained independence, Pandit Nehru ensured that India pressed in every international forum for speedy advancement of African and other colonial territories to self-government and independence. He never wavered in his confidence, which was shared by few other world leaders at the time that Africa would soon be free of colonial rule. As he wrote in his letter to Chief Ministers of Indian States on February 3, 1949:

"Whatever the immediate future may be in Africa, it is clear that the whole continent of Africa has got a big future and changes will take place there fairly rapidly. These changes will be governed by the new political consciousness of the African people. We welcome this new consciousness and wish to coperate with it." (Letters to Chief Ministers, Volume I, pages 275-76).

At the first session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, the Indian delegation carried his instruction to give highest priority to the issues of colonialism and racism.

It not only pressed the complaint concerning racial discrimination against Indians in South Africa, but was instrumental in defeating the maneuvre of the South African government to annex the mandated territory of South West Africa. It fought doggedly to revise the trusteeship agreements proposed by the colonial Powers in favour of the colonial peoples, asserting that sovereignty belonged to the people of the territories and not the administering Powers.

This was a difficult task as the United Nations was then dominated by the colonial Powers and their friends, and even other Asian States tended to vacillate or succumb to pressures. The espousal of the cause of the peoples oppressed by colonialism and racism earned India the hostility of colonial Powers which increased with the aggravation of the "cold war" and the rise of military alliances and blocs. This experience was to have a significant effect on the country`s foreign relations.

India`s support for African freedom was not confined to public statements or debates at the United Nations and other fora or even diplomatic exchanges. Pandit Nehru was always responsive to requests of African leaders and organizations for practical assistance.

He instituted a scholarship programme for African students at the request of Kenyan organizations in 1946. The programme was rapidly expanded and despite the acute scarcity of places in Indian educational institutions, facilities were readily provided for African applicants. Pandit Nehru took personal interest in the welfare and progress of the African students.

In 1952, when Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned in Kenya, he sent a senior counsel for his defence despite the resentment of British authorities. In 1955, when the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress sought to send a delegation to the Asian- African Conference, he arranged for their travel to Bandung and introduced the delegation to the leaders at the Conference. In 1960, when Oliver Tambo escaped to Bechuanaland to seek international support for the struggle in South Africa, Pandit Nehru rushed him travel documents by a special plane.

In 1961, when the Congo (now Zaire) was faced with a grave crisis after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, he sent an Indian brigade to serve with the United Nations peacekeeping force. It enabled the United Nations to expel Belgian and other mercenaries and protect the integrity of the Congo.

The process of decolonization of Africa was complicated by the cold war and the system of military alliances which encouraged colonial Powers like Portugal to undertake brutal wars. There was a constant threat of foreign military intervention even after

independence and of a new scramble for Africa. Pandit Nehru was forthright in opposing foreign intervention and the intrusion of East-West conflict into Africa. The non-aligned countries played a signficant role in providing diplomatic and other assistance to enable African countries to withstand external pressures.

Pandit Nehru recognized that the task of building themselves up would be much more difficult and would require the help of all countries. He assured Africa "that so far as India is concerned, all our thinking and emotions are with you, and that so far as we can help, we shall help." (Statement to Seminar on Problems of Portuguese Colonies, October 20, 1961, in Nehru and Africa, page 36). Despite its own economic difficulties, India provided assistance to a number of African countries and liberation movements.

Pandit Nehru`s advocacy of the policy of non- alignment, with its positive and dynamic content, had a great appeal to Africa. With the advance of African countries to independence, the Movement of Non-aligned Countries emerged as a major force in the community of nations.

THE LEGACY OF NEHRU

Pandit Nehru played a historic role in assisting the African people to ensure that the colonial revolution in Asia would be soon be followed by the resurgence of Africa, confounding those who hoped to keep that continent in perpetuity as their preserve. He was, in a sense, one of the architects of the united front determined to destroy the abomination of apartheid in South Africa. The decision of African States to the non-aligned movement en bloc is a tribute to his vision as to that of African leaders.

He has left behind a legacy of intimate friendship between India and Africa in the process of liberation and nation-building. But for him, this was to serve not only the national interests but the larger cause of humanity. The cooperation of India and the African nations - and, indeed, of all non-aligned and like- minded countries - in securing a world without arms and geneuine international cooperation in the interests of humanity is the abiding monument to his memory.

5

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

Vallabhbhai Patel (31 October 1875 - 15 December 1950) was a political and social leader of India who played a major role in the country's struggle for independence and guided its integration into a united, independent nation. In India and across the world, he was often addressed as Sardar, which means Chief in many languages of India. He is hailed as the Iron Man of India.

Raised in the countryside of Gujarat and largely self-educated, Vallabhbhai Patel was employed in successful practice as a lawyer when he was first inspired by the work and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

Patel subsequently organised the peasants of Kheda, Borsad, and Bardoli in Gujarat in non-violent civil disobedience against oppressive policies imposed by the British Raj; in this role, he became one of the most influential leaders in Gujarat. He rose to the leadership of the Indian National Congress and was at the forefront of rebellions and political events, organising the party for elections in 1934 and 1937, and promoting the Quit India movement.

As the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India, Patel organised relief for refugees in Punjab and Delhi, and led efforts to restore peace across the nation. Patel took charge of the task to forge a united India from the 565 semi-autonomous princely states and British-era colonial provinces. Using frank diplomacy backed with the option (and the use) of military action, Patel's leadership enabled the accession of almost every princely state. Hailed as the Iron Man of India, he is also remembered as the "Patron Saint" of India's civil servants for establishing modern

all-India services. Patel was also one of the earliest proponents of property rights and free enterprise in India.

EARLY LIFE

Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel was born at his maternal uncle's house in Nadiad, Gujarat. His actual date of birth was never officially recorded - Patel entered 31 October as his date of birth on his matriculation examination papers. He was the fourth son of Jhaverbhai a Jain by religion and his wife Ladba Patel. They lived in the village of Karamsad, in the Kheda district where Jhaverbhai owned a homestead. Somabhai, Narsibhai and Vithalbhai Patel (also a future political leader) were his elder brothers. He had a younger brother, Kashibhai and a sister, Dahiba. As a young boy, Patel helped his father in the fields and bimonthly kept a day-long fast, abstaining from food and water - a Jain cultural observance that enabled him to develop physical toughness. When he was seventeen years old, Patel's marriage was arranged with Jhaverba, a young girl of twelve or thirteen years from a nearby village. As per custom, the young bride would continue to reside with her parents until her husband started earning and could establish their household.

Patel travelled to attend schools in Nadiad, Petlad and Borsad, living self-sufficiently with other boys. He reputedly cultivated a stoic character - a popular anecdote recounts how he lanced his own painful boil without hesitation, even as the barber supposed to do it trembled. Patel passed his matriculation at the late age of 22; at this point, he was generally regarded by his elders as an unambitious man destined for a commonplace job. But Patel himself harboured a plan - he would study to become a lawyer, work and save funds, travel to England and study to become a barrister. Patel spent years away from his family, studying on his own with books borrowed from other lawyers and passed examinations within two years. Fetching Jhaverba from her parents' home, Patel set up his household in Godhra and enrolled at the bar.

During the many years it took him to save money, Vallabhbhai - now a pleader - earned a reputation as a fierce and skilled lawyer. His wife bore him a daughter, Manibehn, in 1904 and later

a son, Dahyabhai, in 1906. Patel also cared for a friend suffering from Bubonic plague when it swept across Gujarat. When Patel himself came down with the disease, he immediately sent his family to safety, left his home and moved into an isolated house in Nadiad (by other accounts, Patel spent this time in a dilapidated temple); there, he recovered slowly.

Patel practised law in Godhra, Borsad and Anand while taking on the financial burdens of his homestead in Karamsad. When he had saved enough for England and applied for a pass and a ticket, they arrived in the name of "V. J. Patel," at Vithalbhai's home, who bore the same initials. Having harboured his own plans to study in England, Vithalbhai remonstrated to his younger brother that it would be disreputable for an older brother to follow his younger brother. In keeping with concerns for his family's honour, Patel allowed Vithalbhai to go in his place. He also financed his brother's stay and began saving again for his own goals.

In 1909, Patel's wife Jhaverba was hospitalised in Mumbai (then Bombay) to undergo a major surgical operation for cancer. Her health suddenly worsened and despite successful emergency surgery, she died in the hospital. Patel was given a note informing him of his wife's demise as he was cross-examining a witness in court. As per others who witnessed, Patel read the note, pocketed it and continued to intensely cross-examine the witness and won the case. He broke the news to others only after the proceedings had ended. Patel himself decided against marrying again. He raised his children with the help of his family and sent them to English-medium schools in Mumbai. At the age of 36, he journeyed to England and enrolled at the Middle Temple Inn in London. Finishing a 36-month course in 30 months, Patel topped his class despite having no previous college background. Returning to India, Patel settled in the city of Ahmedabad and became one of the city's most successful barristers. Wearing European-style clothes and urbane mannerisms, he also became a skilled bridge player. Patel nurtured ambitions to expand his practise and accumulate great wealth and to provide his children with modern education. He had also made a pact with his brother Vithalbhai to support his entry into politics in the Bombay Presidency, while Patel himself would remain in Ahmedabad and provide for the family.

FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE

At the urging of his friends, Patel won an election to become the sanitation commissioner of Ahmedabad in 1917. While often clashing with British officials on civic issues, he did not show any interest in politics. Upon hearing of Mohandas Gandhi, he joked to Mavlankar that Gandhi would "ask you if you know how to sift pebbles from wheat.

And that is supposed to bring independence." But Patel was deeply impressed when Gandhi defied the British in Champaran for the sake of the area's oppressed farmers. Against the grain of Indian politicians of the time, Gandhi wore Indian-style clothes and emphasised the use of one's mother tongue or any Indian language as opposed to English - the lingua franca of India's intellectuals.

Patel was particularly attracted to Gandhi's inclination to action - apart from a resolution condemning the arrest of political leader Annie Besant, Gandhi proposed that volunteers march peacefully demanding to meet her.

Patel gave a speech in Borsad in September 1917, encouraging Indians nationwide to sign Gandhi's petition demanding Swaraj-independence - from the British. Meeting Gandhi a month later at the Gujarat Political Conference in Godhra, Patel became the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha - a public body which would become the Gujarati arm of the Indian National Congress - at Gandhi's encouragement.

Patel now energetically fought against veth - the forced servitude of Indians to Europeans - and organised relief efforts in wake of plague and famine in Kheda.

The Kheda peasants' plea for exemption from taxation had been turned down by British authorities. Gandhi endorsed waging a struggle there, but could not lead it himself due to his activities in Champaran. When Gandhi asked for a Gujarati activist to devote himself completely to the assignment and Patel volunteered, much to Gandhi's personal delight. Though his decision was made on the spot, Patel later said that his desire and commitment came after intensive personal contemplation, as he realised he would have to abandon his career and material ambitions.

SATYAGRAHA IN GUJARAT

Supported by Congress volunteers Narhari Parikh, Mohanlal Pandya and Abbas Tyabji, Vallabhbhai Patel began a village-to-village tour in the Kheda district, documenting grievances and asking villagers for their support for a statewide revolt by refusing the payment of taxes. Patel emphasised potential hardships with the need for complete unity and non-violence despite any provocation. He received enthusiastic responses from virtually every village. When the revolt was launched and revenue refused, the government sent police and intimidation squads to seize property, including confiscating barn animals and whole farms. Patel organised a network of volunteers to work with individual villages - helping them hide valuables and protect themselves during raids. Thousands of activists and farmers were arrested, but Patel was not.

The revolt began evoking sympathy and admiration across India, including with pro-British Indian politicians. The government agreed to negotiate with Patel and decided to suspend the payment of revenue for the year, even scaling back the rate. Patel emerged as a hero to Gujaratis and admired across India. In 1920, he was elected president of the newly formed Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee - he would serve as its president till 1945.

Patel supported Gandhi's Non-cooperation movement and toured the state to recruit more than 300,000 members and raise over Rs. 1.5 million in funds. Helping organise bonfires of British goods in Ahmedabad, Patel threw in all his English-style clothes. With his daughter Mani and son Dahya, he switched completely to wearing khadi.

Patel also supported Gandhi's controversial suspension of resistance in wake of the Chauri Chaura incident. He worked extensively in the following years in Gujarat against alcoholism, untouchability and caste discrimination, as well as for the empowerment of women. In the Congress, he was a resolute supporter of Gandhi against his Swarajist critics. Patel was elected Ahmedabad's municipal president in 1922, 1924 and 1927 - during his terms, Ahmedabad was extended a major supply of electricity and the school system underwent major reforms.

Drainage and sanitation systems were extended over all the city. He fought for the recognition and payment of teachers employed in schools established by nationalists (out of British control) and even took on sensitive Hindu-Muslim Issues. Sardar Patel personally led relief efforts in the aftermath of the intense torrential rainfall in 1927, which had caused major floods in the city and in the Kheda district and great destruction of life and property. He established refuge centres across the district, raised volunteers, arranged for supply of food, medicines and clothing, as well as emergency funds from the government and public.

When Gandhi was in prison, Sardar Patel was asked by Congressmen to lead the satyagraha in Nagpur in 1923 against a law banning the raising of the Indian flag. He organised thousands of volunteers from all over the country in processions hoisting the flag. Patel negotiated a settlement that obtained the release of all prisoners and allowed nationalists to hoist the flag in public. Later that year, Patel and his allies uncovered evidence suggesting that the police were in league with local dacoits in the Borsad taluka even as the government prepared to levy a major tax for fighting dacoits in the area. More than 6,000 villagers assembled to hear Patel speak and supported the proposed agitation against the tax, which was deemed immoral and unnecessary. He organised hundreds of Congressmen, sent instructions and received information from across the district. Every village in the taluka resisted payment of the tax, and through cohesion, also prevented the seizure of property and lands. After a protracted struggle, the government withdrew the tax. Historians believe that one of Patel's key achievements was the building of cohesion and trust amongst the different castes and communities, which were divided on socio-economic lines.

In April 1928, Sardar Patel returned to the freedom struggle from his municipal duties in Ahmedabad when Bardoli suffered from a serious predicament of a famine and steep tax hike. The revenue hike was steeper than it had been in Kheda even though the famine covered a large portion of Gujarat. After cross-examining and talking to village representatives, emphasizing the potential hardship and need for non-violence and cohesion, Patel initiated the struggle - complete denial of taxes. Sardar Patel

organised volunteers, camps and an information network across affected areas. The revenue refusal was stronger than in Kheda and many sympathy satyagrahas were undertaken across Gujarat. Despite arrests, seizures of property and lands, the struggle intensified. The situation reached a head in August, when through sympathetic intermediaries, he negotiated a settlement repealing the tax hike, reinstating village officials who had resigned in protest and the return of seized property and lands. It was during the struggle and after the victory in Bardoli that Patel was increasingly addressed by his colleagues and followers as Sardar.

LEADING THE CONGRESS

As Gandhi embarked on the Dandi Salt March, Patel was arrested in the village of Ras and tried without witnesses, with no lawyer or pressman allowed to attend. Patel's arrest and Gandhi's subsequent arrest caused the Salt Satyagraha to greatly intensify in Gujarat - districts across Gujarat launched an anti-tax rebellion until and unless Patel and Gandhi were released. Once released, Patel served as interim Congress president, but was re-arrested while leading a procession in Mumbai. After the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Patel was elected Congress president for its 1931 session in Karachi - here the Congress ratified the pact, committed itself to the defence of fundamental rights and human freedoms, and a vision of a secular nation, minimum wage and the abolition of untouchability and serfdom.

Patel used his position as Congress president in organising the return of confiscated lands to farmers in Gujarat. Upon the failure of the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi and Patel were arrested in January 1932 when the struggle re-opened, and imprisoned in the Yeravda Central Jail. During this term of imprisonment, Patel and Gandhi grew close to each other, and the two developed a close bond of affection, trust, and frankness. Their mutual relationship could be described as that of an elder brother - Gandhi - and his younger brother - Patel. Despite having arguments with Gandhi, Patel respected his instincts and leadership. During imprisonment, the two would discuss national and social issues, read Hindu epics and crack jokes. Gandhi also taught Patel Sanskrit language. Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai

kept detailed records of conversations between Gandhi and Patel. When Gandhi embarked on a fast-unto-death protesting the separate electorates allocated for untouchables, Patel looked after Gandhi closely and himself refrained from partaking of food.

Patel was later moved to a jail in Nasik, and refused a British offer for a brief release to attend the cremation of his brother Vithalbhai, who had died in 1934. He was finally released in July of the same year.

Patel headed Congress's all-India election campaign in 1934 and 1937 - he would collect funds, select candidates, determine the Congress stance on issues and opponents. Not contesting a seat for himself, Patel nevertheless guided Congressmen elected in the provinces and at the national level. In 1935, Patel underwent surgery for hemorrhoids, yet guided efforts against plague in Bardoli and again when a drought struck Gujarat in 1939. Patel would guide the Congress ministries that had won power across India with the aim of preserving party discipline - Patel feared that the British would use opportunities to create conflicts among elected Congressmen, and he did not want the party to be distracted from the goal of complete independence. But Patel would clash with Nehru, opposing declarations of the adoption of socialism at the 1936 Congress session, which he believed was a diversion from the main goal of achieving independence. In 1938, Patel organized rank and file opposition to the attempts of then-Congress president Subhash Bose to move away from Gandhi's principles of non-violent resistance. Patel considered Bose to be authoritarian and desirous of more power over the party. He led senior Congress leaders in a protest, which resulted in Bose's resignation. But criticism arose from Bose's supporters, socialists and other Congressmen that Patel himself was acting in an authoritarian manner in his defense of Gandhi's authority.

QUIT INDIA

When World War II broke out, Patel supported Nehru's decision to withdraw the Congress from central and provincial legislatures, contrary to Gandhi's advice, as well as an initiative by senior leader Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari to offer Congress's full support to Britain if it promised Indian independence at the

end of the war and install a democratic government right away. Gandhi had refused to support Britain on the grounds of his moral opposition to war, while Subhash Bose was in militant opposition to the British. The British rejected Rajagopalachari's initiative, and Patel embraced Gandhi's leadership again. He participated in Gandhi's call for individual disobedience, and was arrested in 1940 and imprisoned for nine months. He also opposed the proposals of the Cripps' mission in 1942. Patel lost more than twenty pounds during his period in jail.

While Nehru, Rajagopalachari and Maulana Azad initially criticized Gandhi's proposal for an all-out campaign of civil disobedience to force the British to Quit India, Patel was its most fervent supporter. Arguing that the British would retreat from India as they had from Singapore and Burma, Patel stressed that the campaign start without any delay. Though feeling that the British would not quit immediately, Patel favored an all-out rebellion which would galvanize Indian people, who had been divided in their response to the war, In Patel's view, an all-out rebellion would force the British to concede that continuation of colonial rule had no support in India, and thus speed power transfer to Indians. Believing strongly in the need for revolt, Patel stated his intention to resign from the Congress if the revolt was not approved. Gandhi strongly pressured the All India Congress Committee to approve of an all-out campaign of civil disobedience, and the AICC approved the campaign on 7 August 1942. Though Patel's health had suffered during his stint in jail, Patel gave emotional speeches to large crowds across India, asking people to refuse paying taxes and participate in civil disobedience, mass protests and a shutdown of all civil services. He raised funds and prepared a second-tier of command as a precaution against the arrest of national leaders. Patel made a climactic speech to more than 100,000 people gathered at Gowalia Tank in Bombay (Mumbai) on August 7:

"The Governor of Burma boasts in London that they left Burma only after reducing everything to dust. So you promise the same thing to India?... You refer in your radio broadcasts and newspapers to the government established in Burma by Japan as a puppet government? What sort of government do you have in Delhi now?...When France fell before the Nazi onslaught, in the midst of total war, Mr. Churchill offered union with England to the French. That was indeed a stroke of inspired statesmanship. But when it comes to India? Oh no! Constitutional changes in the midst of a war? Absolutely unthinkable...The object this time is to free India before the Japanese can come and be ready to fight them if they come. They will round up the leaders, round up all. Then it will be the duty of every Indian to put forth his utmost effort - within non-violence. No source is to be left untapped; no weapon untried. This is going to be the opportunity of a lifetime."

Historians believe that Patel's speech was instrumental in electrifying nationalists, who had been skeptical of the proposed rebellion. Patel's organising work in this period is credited by historians for ensuring the success of the rebellion across India. Patel was arrested on 9 August and was imprisoned with the entire Congress Working Committee from 1942 to 1945 at the fort in Ahmednagar. Here he spun cloth, played bridge, read a large number of books, took long walks, practised gardening. He also provided emotional support to his colleagues while awaiting news and developments of the outside.

Patel was deeply pained at the news of the deaths of Mahadev Desai and Kasturba Gandhi later in the year. But Patel wrote in a letter to his daughter that he and his colleagues were experiencing "fullest peace" for having done "their duty." Even though other political parties had opposed the struggle and the British had employed ruthless means of suppression, the Quit India movement was "by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857," as the viceroy cabled to Winston Churchill. More than one hundred thousand people were arrested and thousands killed in police firings. Strikes, protests and other revolutionary activities had broken out across India. When Patel was released on 15 June 1945 he realised that the British were preparing proposals to transfer power to Indian hands.

INDEPENDENCE, INTEGRATION AND ROLE OF GANDHI

In the 1946 election for the Congress presidency, Patel stepped down in favor of Nehru at the request of Gandhi. The election's

importance stemmed from the fact that the elected President would lead free India's first Government. Gandhi asked all 16 states representatives and Congress to elect the right person and Sardar Patel's name was proposed by 13 states representatives out of 16, but Patel respected Gandhi's request to not be the first prime minister. As a Home Minister, Patel merged all parts of India under federal control but Jammu and Kashmir was left out because of Nehru.

After the election of Nehru as the party's president, Patel began directing the Congress campaign for the general elections of the Constituent Assembly of India.

In the elections, the Congress won a large majority of the elected seats, dominating the Hindu electorate. But the Muslim League led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah won a large majority of Muslim electorate seats. The League had resolved in 1940 to demand Pakistan - an independent state for Muslims - and was a fierce critic of the Congress. The Congress formed governments in all provinces save Sindh, Punjab and Bengal, where it entered into coalitions with other parties.

CABINET MISSION AND PARTITION

When the British mission proposed two plans for transfer of power, there was considerable opposition within the Congress to both. The plan of 16 May 1946 proposed a loose federation with extensive provincial autonomy, and the "grouping" of provinces based on religious-majority. The plan of 16 June 1946 proposed the partition of India on religious lines, with over 600 princely states free to choose between independence or accession to either dominion. The League approved both plans, while the Congress flatly rejected the June 16 proposal. Gandhi criticised the May 16 proposal as being inherently divisive, but Patel, realizing that rejecting the proposal would mean that only the League would be invited to form a government, lobbied the Congress Working Committee hard to give its assent to the 16 May proposal. Patel engaged the British envoys Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Pethick-Lawrence and obtained an assurance that the "grouping" clause would not be given practical force, Patel converted Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari to accept the plan. When the League

retracted its approval of the 16 May plan, the viceroy Lord Wavell invited the Congress to form the government. Under Nehru, who was styled the "Vice President of the Viceroy's Executive Council," Patel took charge of the departments of home affairs and information and broadcasting. He moved into a government house on 1, Aurangzeb Road in Delhi - this would be his residence till his death in 1950.

Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the first Congress leaders to accept the partition of India as a solution to the rising Muslim separatist movement led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He had been outraged by Jinnah's Direct Action campaign, which had provoked communal violence across India and by the viceroy's vetoes of his home department's plans to stop the violence on the grounds of constitutionality. Patel severely criticised the viceroy's induction of League ministers into the government, and the revalidation of the grouping scheme by the British without Congress approval. Although further outraged at the League's boycott of the assembly and non-acceptance of the plan of 16 May despite entering government, he was also aware that Jinnah did enjoy popular support amongst Muslims, and that an open conflict between him and the nationalists could degenerate into a Hindu-Muslim civil war of disastrous consequences. The continuation of a divided and weak central government would in Patel's mind, result in the wider fragmentation of India by encouraging more than 600 princely states towards independence. Between the months of December 1946 and January 1947, Patel worked with civil servant V. P. Menon on the latter's suggestion for a separate dominion of Pakistan created out of Muslim-majority provinces. Communal violence in Bengal and Punjab in January and March of 1947 further convinced Patel of the soundness of partition. Patel, a fierce critic of Jinnah's demand that the Hindu-majority areas of Punjab and Bengal be included in a Muslim state, obtained the partition of those provinces, thus blocking any possibility of their inclusion in Pakistan. Patel's decisiveness on the partition of Punjab and Bengal had won him many supporters and admirers amongst the Indian public, which had tired of the League's tactics, but he was criticised by Gandhi, Nehru, secular Muslims and socialists for a perceived eagerness to do so.

When Lord Louis Mountbatten formally proposed the plan on 3 June 1947, Patel gave his approval and lobbied Nehru and other Congress leaders to accept the proposal. Knowing Gandhi's deep anguish regarding proposals of partition, Patel engaged him in frank discussion in private meetings over the perceived practical unworkability of any Congress-League coalition, the rising violence and the threat of civil war. At the All India Congress Committee meeting called to vote on the proposal, Patel said:

"I fully appreciate the fears of our brothers from [the Muslim-majority areas]. Nobody likes the division of India and my heart is heavy. But the choice is between one division and many divisions. We must face facts. We cannot give way to emotionalism and sentimentality. The Working Committee has not acted out of fear. But I am afraid of one thing, that all our toil and hard work of these many years might go waste or prove unfruitful. My nine months in office has completely disillusioned me regarding the supposed merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Except for a few honourable exceptions, Muslim officials from the top down to the chaprasis (peons or servants) are working for the League. The communal veto given to the League in the Mission Plan would have blocked India's progress at every stage. Whether we like it or not, de facto Pakistan already exists in the Punjab and Bengal. Under the circumstances I would prefer a de jure Pakistan, which may make the League more responsible. Freedom is coming. We have 75 to 80 percent of India, which we can make strong with our own genius. The League can develop the rest of the country."

Following Gandhi's and Congress' approval of the plan, Patel represented India on the Partition Council, where he oversaw the division of public assets, and selected the Indian council of ministers with Nehru. However, neither he nor any other Indian leader had foreseen the intense violence and population transfer that would take place with partition. Patel would take the lead in organising relief and emergency supplies, establishing refugee camps and visiting the border areas with Pakistani leaders to encourage peace. Despite these efforts, estimates on the death toll vary from around two hundred thousand, to over a million people. The estimated number of refugees in both countries exceeds 15 million.

Understanding that Delhi and Punjab policemen, accused of organising attacks on Muslims, were personally affected by the tragedies of partition, Patel called out the Indian Army with South Indian regiments to restore order, imposing strict curfews and shoot-at-sight orders. Visiting the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah area in Delhi, where thousands of Delhi Muslims feared attacks, he prayed at the shrine, visited the people and reinforced the presence of police.

He suppressed from the press reports of atrocities in Pakistan against Hindus and Sikhs to prevent retaliatory violence. Establishing the Delhi Emergency Committee to restore order and organising relief efforts for refugees in the capital, Patel publicly warned officials against partiality and neglect. When reports reached Patel that large groups of Sikhs were preparing to attack Muslim convoys heading for Pakistan, Patel hurried to Amritsar and met Sikh and Hindu leaders. Arguing that attacking helpless people was cowardly and dishonourable, Patel emphasised that Sikh actions would result in further attacks against Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. He assured the community leaders that if they worked to establish peace and order and guarantee the safety of Muslims, the Indian government would react forcefully to any failures of Pakistan to do the same. Additionally, Patel addressed a massive crowd of an estimated 200,000 refugees who had surrounded his car after the meetings:

"Here, in this same city, the blood of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims mingled in the bloodbath of Jallianwala Bagh. I am grieved to think that things have come to such a pass that no Muslim can go about in Amritsar and no Hindu or Sikh can even think of living in Lahore. The butchery of innocent and defenceless men, women and children does not behove brave men... I am quite certain that India's interest lies in getting all her men and women across the border and sending out all Muslims from East Punjab. I have come to you with a specific appeal. Pledge the safety of Muslim refugees crossing the city. Any obstacles or hindrances will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are already performing prodigious feats of endurance. If we have to fight, we must fight clean. Such a fight must await an appropriate time and conditions and you must be watchful in

choosing your ground. To fight against the refugees is no fight at all. No laws of humanity or war among honourable men permit the murder of people who have sought shelter and protection. Let there be truce for three months in which both sides can exchange their refugees. This sort of truce is permitted even by laws of war. Let us take the initiative in breaking this vicious circle of attacks and counter-attacks. Hold your hands for a week and see what happens. Make way for the refugees with your own force of volunteers and let them deliver the refugees safely at our frontier."

Following his dialogue with community leaders and his speech, no further attacks occurred against Muslim refugees, and a wider peace and order was re-established soon over the entire area. However, Patel was criticised by Nehru, secular Muslims and taxed by Gandhi over his alleged wish to see Muslims from other parts of India depart. While Patel vehemently denied such allegations, the acrimony with Maulana Azad and other secular Muslim leaders increased when Patel refused to dismiss Delhi's Sikh police commissioner, who was accused of discrimination. Hindu and Sikh leaders also accused Patel and other leaders of not taking Pakistan sufficiently to task over the attacks on their communities there, and Muslim leaders further criticised him for allegedly neglecting the needs of Muslims leaving for Pakistan, and concentrating resources for incoming Hindu and Sikh refugees. Patel clashed with Nehru and Azad over the allocation of houses in Delhi vacated by Muslims leaving for Pakistan - Nehru and Azad desired to allocate them for displaced Muslims, while Patel argued that no government professing secularism must make such exclusions. However, Patel was publicly defended by Gandhi and received widespread admiration and support for speaking frankly on communal issues and acting decisively and resourcefully to quell disorder and violence.

POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF INDIA

Under the June 3 plan, more than 600 princely states were given the option of joining either India or Pakistan, or choosing independence. Indian nationalists and large segments of the public feared that if these states did not accede, a vast majority of the

people and territory would be fragmented. The Congress as well as senior British officials considered Patel the best man for the task of achieving unification of the princely states with the Indian dominion. Gandhi had said to Patel "the problem of the States is so difficult that you alone can solve it". He was considered a statesman of integrity with the practical acumen and resolve to accomplish a monumental task. Patel asked V. P. Menon, a senior civil servant with whom he had worked over the partition of India, to become his right-hand as chief secretary of the States Ministry. On 6 May 1947, Patel began lobbying the princes, attempting to make them receptive towards dialogue with the future Government and trying to forestall potential conflicts.

Patel used social meetings and unofficial surroundings to engage most monarchs, inviting them to lunch and tea at his home in Delhi. At these meetings, Patel stated that there was no inherent conflict between the Congress and the princely order. Nonetheless, he stressed that the princes would need to accede to India in good faith by 15 August 1947. Patel invoked the patriotism of India's monarchs, asking them to join in the freedom of their nation and act as responsible rulers who cared about the future of their people. He persuaded the princes of 565 states of the impossibility of independence from the Indian republic, especially in the presence of growing opposition from their subjects. He proposed favourable terms for the merger, including creation of privy purses for the descendants of the rulers. While encouraging the rulers to act with patriotism, Patel did not rule out force, setting a deadline of 15 August 1947 for them to sign the instrument of accession document. All but three of the states willingly merged into the Indian union - only Jammu and Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad did not fall into his basket.

Junagadh was especially important to Patel, since it was in his home state of Gujarat. The Nawab had under pressure from Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto acceded to Pakistan. It was however, quite far from Pakistan and 80% of its population was Hindu. Patel combined diplomacy with force, demanding that Pakistan annul the accession, and that the Nawab accede to India. He sent the Army to occupy three principalities of Junagadh to show his resolve. Following widespread protests and the formation of a

civil government, or Aarzi Hukumat, both Bhutto and the Nawab fled to Karachi, and under Patel's orders, Indian Army and police units marched into the state. A plebiscite later organised produced a 99.5% vote for merger with India. In a speech at the Bahauddin College in Junagadh following the latter's take-over, Patel emphasised his feeling of urgency on Hyderabad, which he felt was more vital to India than Kashmir:

> *"If Hyderabad does not see the writing on the wall, it goes the way Junagadh has gone. Pakistan attempted to set off Kashmir against Junagadh. When we raised the question of settlement in a democratic way, they (Pakistan) at once told us that they would consider it if we applied that policy to Kashmir. Our reply was that we would agree to Kashmir if they agreed to Hyderabad."*

Hyderabad was the largest of the princely states, and included parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra states. Its ruler, the Nizam Osman Ali Khan was a Muslim, although over 80% of its people were Hindu. The Nizam sought independence or accession with Pakistan. Muslim forces loyal to Nizam, called the Razakars, under Qasim Razvi pressed the Nizam to hold out against India, while organising attacks with militant Communists on people on Indian soil. Even though a Standstill Agreement was signed due to the desperate efforts of Lord Mountbatten to avoid a war, the Nizam rejected deals and changed his positions. In September 1948, Patel emphasised in Cabinet meetings that India should take no more, and reconciled Nehru and the Governor-General, Chakravarti Rajgopalachari to military action. Following preparations, Patel ordered the Indian Army to integrate Hyderabad (in his capacity as Acting Prime Minister) when Nehru was touring Europe. The action was termed Operation Polo, in which thousands of Razakar forces had been killed, but Hyderabad was comfortably secured into the Indian Union. The main aim of Mountbatten and Nehru in avoiding a forced annexation was to prevent an outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence. Patel insisted that if Hyderabad was allowed to continue with its antics, the prestige of the Government would fall and then neither Hindus nor Muslims would feel secure in its realm. After defeating Nizam, Patel retained him as the ceremonial chief of state, and held talks with him.

LEADING INDIA

Governor General Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Nehru and Patel formed the triumvirate which ruled India from 1948 to 1950. Prime Minister Nehru was intensely popular with the masses, but Patel enjoyed the loyalty and faith of rank and file Congressmen, state leaders and India's civil services. Patel was a senior leader in the Constituent Assembly of India and was responsible in a large measure for shaping India's constitution. Patel was a key force behind the appointment of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar as the chairman of the drafting committee, and the inclusion of leaders from a diverse political spectrum in the process of writing the constitution.

Patel was the chairman of the committees responsible for minorities, tribal and excluded areas, fundamental rights and provincial constitutions. Patel piloted a model constitution for the provinces in the Assembly, which contained limited powers for the state governor, who would defer to the President - he clarified it was not the intention to let the governor exercise power which could impede an elected government. He worked closely with Muslim leaders to end separate electorates and the more potent demand for reservation of seats for minorities. Patel would hold personal dialogues with leaders of other minorities on the question, and was responsible for the measure that allows the President to appoint Anglo-Indians to Parliament. His intervention was key to the passage of two articles that protected civil servants from political involvement and guaranteed their terms and privileges. He was also instrumental in the founding the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service, and for his defence of Indian civil servants from political attack, he is known as the "patron saint" of India's services.

When a delegation of Gujarati farmers came to him citing their inability to send their milk production to the markets without being fleeced by middlemen, Patel exhorted them to organise the processing and sale of milk by themselves, and guided them to create the Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited, which preceded the Amul milk products brand. Patel also pledged the reconstruction of the ancient but dilapidated Somnath Temple in Saurashtra - he oversaw the creation of a

public trust and restoration work, and pledged to dedicate the temple upon the completion of work (the work was completed after Patel's death, and the temple was inaugurated by the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad).

When the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir began in September 1947, Patel immediately wanted to send troops into Kashmir. But agreeing with Nehru and Mountbatten, he waited till Kashmir's monarch had acceded to India. Patel then oversaw India's military operations to secure Srinagar, the Baramulla Pass and the forces retrieved a lot of territory from the invaders. Patel, along with Defence Minister Baldev Singh administered the entire military effort, arranging for troops from different parts of India to be rushed to Kashmir and for a major military road connecting Srinagar to Pathankot be built in 6 months. Patel strongly advised Nehru against going for arbitration to the United Nations, insisting that Pakistan had been wrong to support the invasion and the accession to India was valid. He did not want foreign interference in a bilateral affair. Patel opposed the release of Rs. 55 crores to the Government of Pakistan, convinced that the money would go to finance the war against India in Kashmir. The Cabinet had approved his point but it was reversed when Gandhi, who feared an intensifying rivalry and further communal violence, went on a fast-unto-death to obtain the release. Patel, though not estranged from Gandhi, was deeply hurt at the rejection of his counsel and a Cabinet decision.

In 1949, a crisis arose when the number of Hindu refugees entering West Bengal, Assam and Tripura from East Pakistan climbed over 800,000. The refugees in many cases were being forcibly evicted by Pakistani authorities, and were victims of intimidation and violence. Nehru invited Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan to find a peaceful solution. Despite his aversion, Patel reluctantly met Khan and discussed the matters. Patel strongly criticised, however, Nehru's intention to sign a pact that would create minority commissions in both countries and pledge both India and Pakistan to a commitment to protect each other's minorities. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and K.C. Neogy, two Bengali ministers resigned and Nehru was intensely criticised in West Bengal for allegedly appeasing Pakistan. The pact was

immediately in jeopardy. Patel however, publicly came out to Nehru's aid. He gave emotional speeches to members of Parliament, and the people of West Bengal, and spoke with scores of delegations of Congressmen, Hindus, Muslims and other public interest groups, persuading them to give peace a final effort. The pact was approved and within a year, most of the Hindu refugees had returned to East Pakistan.

GANDHI'S DEATH AND RELATIONS WITH NEHRU

Patel was intensely loyal to Gandhi and both he and Nehru looked to him to arbitrate disputes. However, Nehru and Patel sparred over national issues. When Nehru asserted control over Kashmir policy, Patel objected to Nehru's sidelining his home ministry's officials. Nehru was offended by Patel's decision-making regarding the states' integration, having neither consulted him nor the cabinet. Patel asked Gandhi to relieve him of his obligation to serve, knowing that he lacked Nehru's youth and popularity. He believed that an open political battle would hurt India. After much personal deliberation and contrary to Patel's prediction, Gandhi on 30 January 1948 told Patel not to leave the government. A free India, according to Gandhi, needed both Patel and Nehru. Patel was the last man to privately talk with Gandhi, who was assassinated just minutes after Patel's departure. At Gandhi's wake, Nehru and Patel embraced each other and addressed the nation together. Patel gave solace to many associates and friends and immediately moved to forestall any possible violence. Within two months of Gandhi's death, Patel suffered a major heart attack; the timely action of his daughter, his secretary and nurse saved Patel's life. Speaking later, Patel attributed the attack to the "grief bottled up" due to Gandhi's death.

Criticism arose from the media and other politicians that Patel's home ministry had failed to protect Gandhi. Emotionally exhausted, Patel tendered a letter of resignation, offering to leave the government. Patel's secretary convinced him to withhold the letter, seeing it as fodder for Patel's political enemies and political conflict in India. However, Nehru sent Patel a letter dismissing any question of personal differences and his desire for Patel's ouster. He reminded Patel of their 30-year partnership in the

freedom struggle and asserted that after Gandhi's death, it was especially wrong for them to quarrel. Nehru, Rajagopalachari and other Congressmen publicly defended Patel. Moved, Patel publicly endorsed Nehru's leadership and refuted any suggestion of discord. Patel publicly dispelled any notion that he sought to be prime minister.

Though the two committed themselves to joint leadership and non-interference in Congress party affairs, they would criticise each other in matters of policy, clashing on the issues of Hyderabad's integration and UN mediation in Kashmir. Nehru declined Patel's counsel on sending assistance to Tibet after its 1950 invasion by the People's Republic of China and ejecting the Portuguese from Goa by military force.

When Nehru pressured Dr. Rajendra Prasad to decline a nomination to become the first President of India in 1950 in favour of Rajagopalachari, he thus angered the party, which felt Nehru was attempting to impose his will. Nehru sought Patel's help in winning the party over, but Patel declined and Prasad was duly elected.

Nehru opposed the 1950 Congress presidential candidate Purushottam Das Tandon, a conservative Hindu leader, endorsing Jivatram Kripalani instead and threatening to resign if Tandon was elected. Patel rejected Nehru's views and endorsed Tandon in Gujarat, where Kripalani received not one vote despite hailing from that state himself. Patel believed Nehru had to understand that his will was not law with the Congress, but he personally discouraged Nehru from resigning after the latter felt that the party had no confidence in him.

Death

On 29 March 1949, authorities lost radio contact with a plane carrying Patel, his daughter Manibehn and the Maharaja of Patiala. Engine failure caused the pilot to make an emergency landing in a desert area in Rajasthan. With all passengers safe, Patel and others tracked down a nearby village and local officials. When Patel returned to Delhi, thousands of Congressmen gave him a resounding welcome. In Parliament, MPs gave a long, standing ovation to Patel, stopping proceedings for half an hour. In his

twilight years, Patel was honoured by members of Parliament and awarded honorary doctorates of law by the Punjab University and Osmania University.

Patel's health declined rapidly through the summer of 1950. He later began coughing blood, whereupon Manibehn began limiting his meetings and working hours and arranged for a personalised medical staff to begin attending to Patel. The Chief Minister of West Bengal and doctor Bidhan Roy heard Patel make jokes about his impending end, and in a private meeting Patel frankly admitted to his ministerial colleague N. V. Gadgil that he was not going to live much longer.

Patel's health worsened after 2 November, when he began losing consciousness frequently and was confined to his bed. He was flown to Mumbai on 12 December to recuperate at his son Dahyabhai's flat - his condition deemed critical, Nehru and Rajagopalachari came to the airport to see him off. After suffering a massive heart attack (his second), he died on 15 December 1950. In an unprecedented and unrepeated gesture, on the day after his death more than 1,500 officers of India's civil and police services congregated to mourn at Patel's residence in Delhi and pledged "complete loyalty and unremitting zeal" in India's service. His cremation in Sonapur, Mumbai, was attended by large crowds, Nehru, Rajagopalachari, President Prasad, and many Congressmen and freedom fighters.

CRITICISM AND LEGACY

During his lifetime, Vallabhbhai Patel received criticism of an alleged bias against Muslims during the time of partition. He was criticised by nationalist Muslims such as Maulana Azad as well as Hindu nationalists for readily plumping for partition. Patel was criticised by supporters of Subhash Bose for acting coercively to put down politicians not supportive of Gandhi.

Socialist politicians such as Jaya Prakash Narayan and Asoka Mehta criticised him for his personal proximity to Indian industrialists such as the Birla and Sarabhai families. Some historians have criticised Patel's actions on the integration of princely states as undermining the right of self-determination for those states.

However, Patel is credited for being almost single-handedly responsible for unifying India on the eve of independence. He won the admiration of many Indians for speaking frankly on the issues of Hindu-Muslim relations and not shying from using military force to integrate India. His skills of leadership and practical judgement were hailed by British statesmen - his opponents in the freedom struggle - such as Lord Wavell, Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Mountbatten.

Some historians and admirers of Patel such as Rajendra Prasad and industrialist J.R.D. Tata have expressed opinions that Patel would have made a better prime minister for India than Nehru. Nehru's critics and Patel's admirers cite Nehru's belated embrace of Patel's advice regarding the UN and Kashmir and the integration of Goa by military action. Proponents of free enterprise cite the failings of Nehru's socialist policies as opposed to Patel's defence of property rights and his mentorship of the Amul co-operative project.

Among Patel's surviving family, Manibehn Patel lived in a flat in Mumbai for the rest of her life following her father's death; she often led the work of the Sardar Patel Memorial Trust - which organises the prestigious annual Sardar Patel Memorial Lectures - and other charitable organisations. Dahyabhai Patel was a businessman who eventually was elected to serve in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) as an MP in the 1960s.

For many decades after his death, there was a perceived lack of effort from the Government of India, the national media and the Congress party regarding the commemoration of Patel's life and work. However, Patel is lionised as a hero in Gujarat and his family home in Karamsad is still preserved in his memory. Patel was officially awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour posthumously in 1991.

Patel's birthday, 31 October, is celebrated nationally in India as Sardar Jayanti. The Sardar Patel National Memorial was established in 1980 at the Moti Shahi Mahal in Ahmedabad. It composes of a museum, a gallery of portraits and historical pictures and a library, which stores important documents and books

associated with Patel and his life. Amongst the exhibits are many of Patel's personal effects and relics from various periods of his personal and political life.

Patel is the namesake of many public institutions in India. A major initiative to build dams, canals and hydroelectric power plants on the Narmada river valley to provide a tri-state area with drinking water, electricity and increase agricultural production was christened the Sardar Sarovar. Patel is also the namesake of the Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology, the Sardar Patel University and the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, which are among the nation's premier institutions. In Richard Attenborough's Gandhi (1982), actor Saeed Jaffrey portrayed Patel. In 1993, the biopic Sardar was produced and directed by Ketan Mehta and featured noted Indian actor Paresh Rawal as Patel; it focused on Patel's leadership in the years leading up to independence, the partition of India, India's political integration and Patel's relationship with Gandhi and Nehru.

6

Patel as Gandhiji's Disciple

The impact of Gandhiji's personality on Vallabhbhai was tremendous. It gave him a new mission in life. The Champaran struggle waged by Gandhiji had a sweeping effect on Patel's mind. In Gandhiji's Champaran victory Patel saw the beginning of a new agrarian revolution. His interest in politics had been kindled, as became abunduntly clear in the Provincial Political Conference organised by the Gujarat Sabha and presided by Gandhiji at Godhara. The conference appointed a permanent committee with Gandhiji as the President and Patel as one of the secretaries. He became a staunch follower of Gandhiji. From then on there was no looking back. Blessed with rare qualities of fortitude, integrity and an iron determination, Patel played an important role in the freedom movement.

INDOMITABLE PERSONALITY

It was due to his sterling leadership and practical vision that the peasant movement in Gujarat became a success. It was in this struggle that the organisational capacity for which Sardar Patel was famous in the whole country became visible. He took over as the nascent nation's Home Minister at a very crucial juncture in history and devoted himself whole heartedly to ensure that the country which was already partitioned, remained intact and united.

BUILDING A UNION

On the eve of their departure, the British government announced that its paramountcy would lapse not only over the British territory but even over the native States . This meant that

as many as 625 small and big native States would become independent like India and Pakistan. Consequently, the country would be divided into a number of small and big units.

Before embarking on this mammoth task, Sardar sought to ensure the stability of administration by forging a bridge of faith and confidence with the"Steel Frame". Most of the I.C.S. officers suspected that the Congress leaders, particularly Sardar in view of his past experiences with them, would have no faith in the I.C.S. But Sardar rose to the occasion and reposed total trust in their capability to serve the nation. He was, thus, able to win their unstinted support in the endeavour of nation building.

Attempts were afoot for finalising the standstill agreement with the States. It provided that the Central Government will be vested with powers of defence, foreign policy and communications even over the States. Travancore, Hyderabad and some other States declared themselves sovereign States and created hurdles in the agreement. On the other end, Jinnah with a view to tempt Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and other border States made them an unconditional offer to align with Pakistan on their terms.

POLITICAL SAGACITY

To find an amicable solution to this complicated situation, Sardar issued a statement to the princes wherein he appealed to their sense of patriotism and reiterated that the new States department in no way, desire to have supremacy over them. "If at all, any sense of supremacy is required, it would be with common understanding and for common good. We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour, we can raise the country to new greatness, while lack of unity will expose us to unexpected calamities. I hope the Indian States will realise fully that if we do not cooperate and work together in the general interest, anarchy and chaos will overwhelm us all great and small, and lead us to total ruin". The statement which amply reflected his statesmanship and political sagacity, removed whatever doubts lurked in the minds of the princes.

There was a popular agitation in Travancore and the State acceded to India. The Nawab of Bhopal could not take all this but when he realised that there was no alternative, he sent the

instrument of accession duly signed to Sardar. A man of iron will and absolute fearlessness, Sardar Patel tackled the question of 550 and odd State territories and principalities in such a strategic manner which left even his wildest critics in complete amazement. Almost within a year he redrew the map of India with every princely State joining the Indian union and thus, forming part of the political stream of life that was endowed with cultural unity and harmony.

INTRICATE SITUATION

The intricacy of the situation can perhaps be gauged by the fact that there were 26 small States in Orissa and 15 in the Chattisgarh area of present Madhya Pradesh. It required skilful diplomacy on the part of Sardar Patel to persuade them to merge into bigger, more viable units. Even more ticklish was the case of Saurashtra where there were 14 big States, 119 small States and other units under different administrations totalling 860.

The herculean task of merging all of them into the Saurashtra union was also accomplished by Sardar Patel. Soon, State after State started acceding to the Indian Union. One after the other, Gwalior, Indore, Dhar, Dewas all accepted the advice of Sardar. Rajputana States followed the same. The Sikhs of Punjab also cooperated with the merger.

Even by August 15, Hyderabad kept aloof. Hence, Lord Mountbatten himself started negotiations. At one stage, it appeared that there was a settlement but Nizam found himself helpless against the pressures of Razakars. The Razakars started harassing the local public. Thus, when the situation went out of control, Sardar with the consent of the Governor General initiated police action. In 108 hours, the Nizam surrendered and Hyderabad acceded and merged with India. The Nawab of Junagadh accepted an accession with Pakistan. Sardar solved this complex problem in his own inimitable way and the Nawab and his Diwan left Junagadh for Pakistan.

Thus, the 'Yagna' for establishment of a united India undertaken by Sardar was completed with the merger of Hyderabad. Politically, India became one and united. In the history of India stretched over ages, India became one and united for the

first time and that too without shedding a drop of blood. That was the marvel of the personality of Sardar. The sterling qualities of leadership he had shown as leader of Satyagraha, flowered in greater way in the administration of the country, maintenance of law and order and ensuring stability of the country and making it invulnerable.

The euphoria of independence was short-lived as partition brought disastrous consequences for India in the wake of communal conflict. Partition unleashed untold misery and loss of lives and property as millions of Hindu and Muslim refugees fled either Pakistan or India. Both nations were also caught up in a number of conflicts involving the allocation of assets, demarcation of boundaries, equitable sharing of water resources, and control over Kashmir. At the same time, Indian leaders were faced with the stupendous task of national integration and economic development.

When the British relinquished their claims to paramountcy, the 562 independent princely states were given the option to join either of the two nations.

A few princely states readily joined Pakistan, but the rest--except Hyderabad (the largest of the princely states with 132,000 square kilometers and a population of more than 14 million), Jammu and Kashmir (with 3 million inhabitants), and Junagadh (with a population of 545,000)--merged with India. India successfully annexed Hyderabad and Junagadh after "police actions" and promises of privileges to the rulers. The Hindu maharajah of predominantly Muslim Jammu and Kashmir remained uncommitted until armed tribesmen and regular troops from Pakistan infiltrated his domain, inducing him to sign the Instrument of Accession to India on October 27, 1947.

Pakistan refused to accept the legality of the accession, and, as a result, war broke out (see The Experience of Wars, ch. 10). Kashmir remains a source of friction between the neighbors (see South Asia, ch. 9). The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948, in New Delhi, by a Hindu extremist opposed to Gandhi's openness to Muslims ended the tenuous celebration of independence and deepened the hatred and mutual suspicion in Hindu-Muslim relations.

Economic backwardness was one of the serious challenges that India faced at independence. Under three successive five-year plans, inaugurated between 1951 and 1964 under Nehru's leadership, India produced increasing amounts of food. Although food production did not allow self-sufficiency until fiscal year 1984, India has emerged as the nation with the seventh largest gross national product in the world.

Linguistic regionalism eventually reached a crisis stage and undermined the Congress' attempts at nation building. Whereas in the early 1920s, the Congress had deemed that the use of regional vernaculars in education and administration would facilitate the governance of the country, partition made the leaders, especially Nehru, realize how quickly such provincial or subnational interests would dismantle India's fragile unity. However, in the face of widespread agitation for linguistic separation of states, beginning with the Telangana Movement in 1953, in 1956 Nehru reluctantly accepted the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, and the number of states grew by reorganization along linguistic lines. The states became the loci for democratization of political processes at district levels, for expression of regional culture and popular demands against a national culture and unity, for economic development at strategic localities in the rural areas, and for proliferation of opposition parties that ended the possibility of a pan-Indian two-party system.

THE REAL ARCHITECT OF THE CONSTITUTION

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a decisive role in the Constituent Assembly and remained the moving spirit behind some of the landmark provisions of Indian principles.

Patel, a man of action, spoke only when necessary in the Constituent Assembly, yet his impact on the Constitution was much wider than his intervention in the debates.

He played an important role in the selection of members of the drafting committee. He took a strong stand for or against Jawaharlal Nehru on key issues such as fundamental rights, the position of the prime minister, the election procedure of the President and the status of Kashmir. "The Iron Man so dominated the assembly that the Constitution which emerged from it bore

his stamp and could be aptly called the Patel Constitution," says Dr P M Chopra, chief editor of the Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Volume XI.

This special volume of the 15-part series portrays Patel as the maker of the Indian Constitution. Some of the basic tenets of the Constitution, particularly the balancing of fundamental rights with the maintenance of law and order in the state, and the reservation of a whole set of citizens rights as non-justiciable directives of the state were evolved by Patel.

Dr Chopra says Patel's predilection for a strong Centre and his anxiety to guarantee the privileges of the princes is reflected in the Constitution. He also dispensed with separate electorates and seat reservations for the minorities with the unanimous consent of their leaders.

Just as Manu, a brahmin gave the Hindus their first code, Vallabhbhai ensured that Dr B R Ambedkar, a harijan, piloted the basic law of new India. He was also instrumental for the entry of eminent jurists like B N Rau, K M Munshi, Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar and Gopalaswami Ayyangar into the Assembly. "Not only did Patel see that Ambedkar was appointed law minister but ensured that he completed his tenure despite Nehru's wish to drop him at one point," points out Dr Chopra.

After adopting the 'Objectives Resolution', moved by Nehru, the Constituent Assembly appointed an advisory committee under Patel on January 24, 1947. The committee dealt with the rights of citizens, minorities, tribal and excluded areas. Patel presented the committee's recommendations on political safeguards for minorities sans separate electorates on August 27. The recommendations were accepted in the Assembly the following day.

Dr Chopra points out that the Sardar's interventions in the Constituent Assembly during the debates were few, but forceful.

On October 10, 1949, Patel defended the inclusion of Article 283-A (incorporated in the Constitution as Article 314) which gave constitutional guarantee to the terms and privileges granted to ICS officers opting for service in Independent India. Two days later, during a debate on Article 211A (which was renumbered

238 only to be repealed later), Patel outlined a concept of people's polity which replaced the rulers polity in states acceding to the Union and defended privy purses.

On October 14, he denied any breach of promise about reservations in services to the Sikhs in a debate on Article 296 (renumbered 335), which accommodated scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the services.

A month later, Patel explained the division of the Sirohi state between Bombay and Rajasthan on the basis of the schedule listing of states and territories.

The author says, subsequently, Patel only spoke twice--on November 26 to announce the acceptance of the Constitution by the states, and on January 24, 1950, to felicitate Dr Rajendra Prasad on being election as the first President of India.

In an Assembly debate on the interim report on fundamental rights moved by Patel on April 29, 1947, H N Kunzru and Somnath Lahiri said it was difficult to make a fine distinction on justiciable rights and rights that did not fall in that category.

"Indians had found that a government which does not depend on the people and rules the country by means of force, detaining people without trial, without a judicial process," commented Lahiri. He added that these were fundamental rights from a police constable's view and not that of a free and fighting nation.

Professor N G Ranga, however, complimented the 'charter of fundamental rights' saying the clauses were intended to see that those who believed in liberalism at one end and Communism at the other could not take advantage of the rights to pave way for totalitarianism.

In his reply, the Sardar said there were two schools of thought -- one advocating the inclusion of as many rights as possible in the report and the other seeking to restrict it to only those considered as fundamental. "Between the two schools, finally a mean was drawn," says Dr Chopra.

Patel piloted a model Constitution for the provinces in the Assembly on July 15, 1947 which contained the limited powers of governor, instructing him to report to the President about any grave situation arising in the province.

Patel clarified it was not the intention to let the governor exercise that power which could bring the provincial ministry in conflict with the governor's office.

Enumerating the other special features of the model Constitution, he said one such aspect was the many checks provided to ensure fair appointments in the high court. The judges were to be appointed by the President in consultation with the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the chief justice of the provincial high court and the governor with the advice of the provincial ministry.

On August 30, Patel presented the directive principles of state policy at the Assembly. Though not cognisable by any court of law, the directive principles were fundamental in the governance of the country.

On October 12, 1949, he outlined the concept of people's polity to replace the rulers polity in states acceding to the Indian Union; and a special status for Jammu and Kashmir.

About a month later, the Sardar announced in the House, "All the nine states, specified in part B of the first schedule of the Constitution, including the state of Hyderabad, have signified their acceptance of the Constitution."

The Constitution came into force from January 26, 1950.

BARDOLI SATYAGRAHA

The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, in the state of Gujarat, India during the period of the British Raj, was a major episode of civil disobedience and revolt in the Indian Independence Movement. Its success gave rise to Vallabhbhai Patel as one of the greatest leaders of the independence struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi had led two great revolts of communities of poor Indian farmers against the tyranny of the British government and allied landlords in Champaran, Bihar, and Kheda, Gujarat. Success in both struggles had helped win the farmers economic and civil rights, and electrified India's people. In 1920, the Indian National Congress under Gandhi's leadership launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. Millions of Indians revolted against the British, boycotting the courts, government services,

schools and disavowing titles, pensions and British clothes and goods. The freedom fighters, known as Satyagrahis, peacefully protested authoritarian British laws, and called for India's independnece. Many thousands were beaten, tortured and arrested.

In 1922, however, a mob of protestors killed some policemen in Chauri Chaura. Fearing a slide into violence and anarchy, Gandhi called for the struggle to be suspended. He was arrested in the same year and sentenced to be imprisoned for six years, but released in 1924. In this struggle, many considered sardar Patel as the Lord of Bardoli.

The Crisis

In 1925, the taluka of Bardoli in Gujarat suffered from floods and famine, causing crop production to suffer and leaving farmers facing great financial troubles. However, the Government of the Bombay Presidency had raised the tax rate by 30% that year, and despite petitions from civic groups, refused to cancel the rise in the face of the calamities. The situation for the farmers was grave enough that they barely had enough property and crops to pay-off the tax, let alone for feeding themselves afterwards.

Considering the Options

The Gujarati activists Narhari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohanlal Pandya talked to village chieftains and farmers, and solicited the help of Gujarat's most prominent freedom fighter, Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel had previously guided Gujarat's farmers during the Kheda struggle, and had served recently as Ahmedabad's municipal president. He was widely respected by common Gujaratis across the state.

Patel told a delegation of farmers frankly that if they should realize fully what a revolt would imply. He would not lead them unless he had the unanimous understanding and agreement of all the villages involved. Refusing payment of taxes could lead to their property being confiscated, including their lands, and many would go to jail. They could face complete decimation. The villagers replied that they were prepared for the worst, but definitely could not accept the Government's injustice. Patel then asked Gandhi to consider the matter. But Gandhi merely asked what Patel

thought, and when the latter replied with confidence about the prospects, he gave his blessing. But Gandhi and Patel agreed that neither the Congress nor Gandhi would directly involve themselves, and the struggle left entirely to the people of Bardoli taluka.

The Struggle

Patel first wrote to the Governor of Bombay, asking him to reduce the taxes for the year in face of the calamities. But the Governor ignored the letter, and reciprocated by announcing the date of collection.

Patel then instructed all the farmers of Bardoli taluka to refuse payment of their taxes. Aided by Parikh, Vyas and Pandya, he divided Bardoli into several zones - each with a leader and volunteers specifically assigned. Patel also placed some Gujarati activists close to the government, to act as informers on the movements of government officials.

Above all, Patel instructed the farmers to remain completely non-violent, and not respond physically to any incitments or aggressive actions from officials. He reassured them that the struggle would not end until not only the cancellation of all taxes for the year, but also when all the seized property and lands were returned to their rightful owners.

The farmers received complete support from their compatriots in Gujarat. Many hid their most precious belongings with relatives in other parts, and the protestors received financial support and essential supplies from supporters in other parts. But Patel refused permission to enthusiastic supporters in Gujarat and other parts of India from going on sympathetic protest.

The Government declared that it would crush the revolt. Along with tax inspectors, bands of Pathans were gathered from northwest India to forcibly seize the property of the villagers and terrorize them. The Pathans and the men of the collectors forced themselves into the houses, took all property, including cattle.

The government began to auction the houses and the lands. But not a single man from Gujarat or anywhere else in India came forward to buy them. Patel had appointed volunteers in every

village to keep watch. As soon as he sighted the officials who were coming to auction the property, the volunteer would sound his bugle. The farmers would leave the village and hide in the jungles. The officials would find the entire village empty. They could never find out who owned a particular house.

However, some rich people from Bombay came to buy some lands. There was also one village recorded that paid the tax. A complete social boycott was organized against them, wherein relatives broke their ties to families in the village.

Members of the legislative councils of Bombay and across India were angered by the terrible treatment of the protesting farmers. Indian members resigned their offices, and expressed open support of the farmers. The Government was heavily criticized, even by many in the Raj's offices.

Resolution

In 1928, an agreement was finally brokered by a Parsi member of the Bombay government. The Government agreed to restore the confiscated lands and properties, as well as cancel revenue payment not only for the year, but cancel the 30% raise until after the succeeding year. The farmers celebrated their victory, but Patel continued to work to ensure that all lands and properties were returned to every farmer, and that no one was left out. When the Government refused to ask the people who had bought some of the lands to return them, wealthy sympathizers from Bombay bought them out, and returned the lands to the rightful owners.

Commemoration

The momentum from the Bardoli victory aided in the resurrection of the freedom struggle nationwide. In 1930, the Congress would declare Indian independence, and the Salt Satyagraha would be launched by Gandhi.

While Patel credited Gandhi's teachings and the farmers' undying resolve, people across the nation recognized his vital leadership. Gandhi and his fellow satyagrahis called him Sardar for the first time, which in Gujarati and most Indian languages means Chief or Leader. It was after Bardoli that Sardar Patel became one of India's most important leaders.

CHAMPARAN AND KHEDA SATYAGRAHA

The first Satyagraha revolutions inspired by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian Independence Movement occurred in Kheda district of Gujarat and the Champaran district of Bihar between the years of 1918 and 1919.

Champaran, Bihar

In Champaran, a district in the then-province, now state of Bihar, tens of thousands of landless serfs, indentured laborers and poor farmers were forced to grow indigo and other cash crops instead of the food crops necessary for their survival.These goods were bought from them at a very low price. Suppressed by the ruthless militias of the landlords (mostly British), they were given measly compensation, leaving them mired in extreme poverty. The villages were kept extremely dirty and unhygienic, and alcoholism, untouchability and purdah were rampant. Now in the throes of a devastating famine, the British levied an oppressive tax which they insisted on increasing in rate. The situation was desperate.

Kheda, Gujarat

In Kheda, a district of villages and small towns in Gujarat, the peasants mostly owned their own lands, and were economically better-off than their compatriots in Bihar, although on the whole, the district was plagued by poverty, scant resources, the social evils of alcoholism and untouchability, and overall British indifference and hegemony.

However, a terrible famine had struck the district and a large part of Gujarat, and virtually destroyed the agrarian economy. The poor peasants had barely enough to feed themselves, but the British government of the Bombay Presidency insisted that the farmers not only pay full taxes, but also pay the 23% increase slated to take effect that very year.

Gandhi's Solution

While many civic groups sent petitions and published editorials, Gandhi proposed satyagraha - non-violence, mass civil disobedience. While it was strictly non-violent, Gandhi was

proposing real action, a real revolt that the oppressed peoples of India were dying to undertake.

Gandhi also insisted that neither the protestors in Bihar nor in Gujarat allude to or try to propagate the concept of Swaraj, or Independence. This was not about political freedom, but a revolt against abject tyranny amidst a terrible humanitarian disaster. While accepting participants and help from other parts of India, Gandhi insisted that no other district or province revolt against the Government, and that the Indian National Congress not get involved apart from issuing resolutions of support, to prevent the British from giving it cause to use extensive suppressive measures and brand the revolts as treason.

In Champaran

Gandhi established an ashrama in Champaran, organizing scores of his veteran supporters and fresh volunteers from the region. He organized a detailed study and survey of the villages, accounting the atrocities and terrible episodes of suffering, including the general state of degenerate living. Building on the confidence of villagers, he began leading the clean-up of villages, building of schools and hospitals and encouraging the village leadership to undo purdah, untouchability and the suppression of women. He was joined by many young nationalists from all over India, including Ramarshi Deo Trivedi "Rishi Ji", Brajkishore Prasad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Anugrah Narayan Sinha and Jawaharlal Nehru.

But his main assault came as he was arrested by police on the charge of creating unrest and was ordered to leave the province. Hundreds of thousands of people protested and rallied outside the jail, police stations and courts demanding his release, which the court unwillingly did.

Gandhi led organized protests and strike against the landlords, who with the guidance of the British government, signed an agreement granting more compensation and control over farming for the poor farmers of the region, and cancellation of revenue hikes and collection until the famine ended. It was during this agitation, that Gandhi was addressed by the people as Bapu (Father) and Mahatma (Great Soul).

In Kheda

In Gujarat, Gandhi was only the spiritual head of the struggle. His chief lieutenant, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and a close coterie of devoted Gandhians, namely Narhari Parikh, Mohanlal Pandya and Ravi Shankar Vyas toured the countryside, organized the villagers and gave them political leadership and direction. Many aroused Gujaratis from the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara joined the organizers of the revolt, but Gandhi and Patel resisted the involvement of Indians from other provinces, seeking to keep it a purely Gujarati struggle.

Patel and his colleagues organized a major tax revolt, and all the different ethnic and caste communities of Kheda rallied around it. The peasants of Kheda signed a petition calling for the tax for this year to be scrapped in wake of the famine. The government in Bombay rejected the charter. They warned that if the peasants did not pay, the lands and property would be confiscated and many arrested. And once confiscated, they would not be returned even if most complied. None of the villages flinched.

The tax withheld, the government's collectors and inspectors sent in thugs to seize property and cattle, while the police forfeited the lands and all agrarian property. The farmers did not resist arrest, nor retaliate to the force employed with violence. Instead, they used their cash and valuables to donate to the Gujarat Sabha which was officially organizing the protest.

The revolt was astounding in terms of discipline and unity. Even when all their personal property, land and livelihood were seized, a vast majority of Kheda's farmers remained firmly united in the support of Patel. Gujaratis sympathetic to the revolt in other parts resisted the government machinery, and helped the shelter the relatives and property of the protesting peasants. Those Indians who sought to buy the confiscated lands were ostracized from society. Although nationalists like Sardul Singh Caveeshar called for sympathetic revolts in other parts, Gandhi and Patel firmly rejected the idea.

The Government finally sought to foster an honorable agreement for both parties. The tax for the year in question, and the next would be suspended, and the increase in rate reduced,

while all confiscated property would be returned. Gujaratis also worked in cohesion to return the confiscated lands to their rightful owners. The ones who had bought the lands seized were influenced to return them, even though the British had officially said it would stand by the buyers. it was the first place from where Ghandhiji started satyagrah.

Success and Legacy

Gandhi's resulting fame spread like fire all over the nation. He had become a defining influence on Indian Nationalism. People in Gujarat still revere Gandhi and Sardar Patel, and their role in the freedom struggle. Gujarat is the most industrialized and progressive state in India today. In Bihar, poverty and social conflict pervades what was the founding of the Satyagraha movement. The Naxalite insurgency is centered around the same age-old problem of class struggle between poor farmers and rich landlords, now involving terrorism.

DAHYABHAI PATEL

Dahyabhai Patel (b. 1906 - d. 1967) was the son of Indian leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, an Indian freedom fighter and later a member of the Parliament of India. Educated in Bombay, Dahyabhai Patel graduated from the Gujarat Vidyapith and began working for an insurance company, and settled in Bombay. His first wife Yashoda died, leaving him his son Bipin. He later married Bhanumati and had more children. His flat on Sandhurst Road and later Prabhadevi in Bombay was the frequent residence of Sardar Patel. Although primarily a businessman, Patel participated in the Quit India movement and was imprisoned from 1942 to 1944. After India's independence, Patel won elections to the Lok Sabha in 1957 and 1962, and also served in the Rajya Sabha.

MANIBEHN PATEL

Manibehn Patel (b. 1904 - d. 1988) was the daughter of Indian leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and an Indian freedom fighter. Educated in Bombay, Manibehn adopted the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi in 1918, and started working regularly at his ashram in Ahmedabad. She participated in the Non-Cooperation movement

and the Salt Satyagraha and was arrested for long periods. In the 1930s, she became her father's personal aide, also caring for his personal needs. But she again participated in the Quit India movement and was imprisoned from 1942 to 1945.

Manibehn Patel would serve her father closely until his death in 1950. Moving to Bombay, she worked for the rest of her life with numerous charitable organizations and for the Sardar Patel Memorial Trust, and wrote her memoirs on the freedom struggle and her father's life.

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON 7 NOVEMBER, 1950

. . . .

My dear Jawaharlal,

Ever since my return from Ahmedabad and after the cabinet meeting the same day which I had to attend at practically fifteen minutes' notice and for which I regret I was not able to read all the papers, I have been anxiously thinking over the problem of Tibet and I thought I should share with you what is passing through my mind.

I have carefully gone through the correspondence between the External Affairs Ministry and our Ambassador in Peking and through him the Chinese Government. I have tried to peruse this correspondence as favourably to our Ambassador and the Chinese Government as possible, but I regret to say that neither of them comes out well as a result of this study. The Chinese Government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intention. My own feeling is that at a crucial period they managed to instill into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means.

There can be no doubt that during the period covered by this correspondence the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The final action of the Chinese, in my judgement, is little short of perfidy. The tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us; they chose to be guided by us; and we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese malevolence. From the latest position, it

appears that we shall not be able to rescue the Dalai Lama. Our Ambassador has been at great pains to find an explanation or justification for Chinese policy and actions. As the External Affairs Ministry remarked in one of their telegrams, there was a lack of firmness and unnecessary apology in one or two representations that he made to the Chinese Government on our behalf.

It is impossible to imagine any sensible person believing in the so-called threat to China from Anglo-American machinations in Tibet. Therefore, if the Chinese put faith in this, they must have distrusted us so completely as to have taken us as tools or stooges of Anglo-American diplomacy or strategy. This feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that even though we regard ourselves as the friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends. With the Communist mentality of "whoever is not with them being against them", this is a significant pointer, of which we have to take due note. During the last several months, outside the Russian camp, we have practically been alone in championing the cause of Chinese entry into UN and in securing from the Americans assurances on the question of Formosa.

We have done everything we could to assuage Chinese feelings, to allay its apprehensions and to defend its legitimate claims in our discussions and correspondence with America and Britain and in the UN. Inspite of this, China is not convinced about our disinterestedness; it continues to regard us with suspicion and the whole psychology is one, at least outwardly, of scepticism perhaps mixed with a little hostility. I doubt if we can go any further than we have done already to convince China of our good intentions, friendliness and goodwill. In Peking we have an Ambassador who is eminently suitable for putting across the friendly point of view. Even he seems to have failed to convert the Chinese. Their last telegram to us is an act of gross discourtesy not only in the summary way it disposes of our protest against the entry of Chinese forces into Tibet but also in the wild insinuation that our attitude is determined by foreign influences. It looks as though it is not a friend speaking in that language but a potential enemy.

In the background of this, we have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet,

as we knew it, and the expansion of China almost up to our gates. Throughout history we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas have been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered us about frontiers.

In 1914, we entered into a convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationship. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered into with us in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century. China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas in the north and north-east, we have on our side of the frontier a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans and Mongoloids.

The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to the Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of the potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and that the communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include the important part of Assam. They have their ambitions in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon Line round which to build up even the semblance of an agreement. Chinese irredentism and communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national or historical claims. The danger from the north and north-east, therefore, becomes both communist and imperialist. While our western and north-western threat to security

is still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with communist China in the north and in the north-east, a communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.

Let us also consider the political conditions on this potentially troublesome frontier. Our northern and north-eastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal areas in Assam. From the point of view of communication, there are weak spots. Continuous defensive lines do not exist. There is almost an unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There, too, our outposts do not seem to be fully manned. The contact of these areas with us is by no means close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-Mongoloid prejudices. During the last three years, we have not been able to make any appreciable approaches to the Nagas and other hill tribes in Assam. European missionaries and other visitors had been in touch with them, but their influence was in no way friendly to India or Indians. In Sikkim, there was political ferment some time ago.

It is quite possible that discontent is smouldering there. Bhutan is comparatively quiet, but its affinity with Tibetans would be a handicap. Nepal has a weak oligarchic regime based almost entirely on force: it is in conflict with a turbulent element of the population as well as with enlightened ideas of the modern age. In these circumstances, to make people alive to the new danger or to make them defensively strong is a very difficult task indeed and that difficulty can be got over only by enlightened firmness, strength and a clear line of policy. I am sure the Chinese and their source of inspiration, Soviet Union, would not miss any opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions. In my judgement the

situation is one which we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be vacillating. We must have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve and also of the methods by which we should achieve it. Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating our objectives or in pursuing our policies to attain those objectives is bound to weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident.

Side by side with these external dangers, we shall now have to face serious internal problems as well. I have already asked Iengar to send to the External Affairs Ministry a copy of the Intelligence Bureau's appreciation of these matters. Hitherto, the Communist Party of India has found some difficulty in contacting communists abroad, or in getting supplies of arms, literature, etc., from them. They had to contend with the difficult Burmese and Pakistan frontiers on the east or with the long seaboard. They shall now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese communists and through them to other foreign communists. Infiltration of spies, fifth columnists and communists would now be easier.

Instead of having to deal with isolated communist pockets in Telengana and Warrangal we may have to deal with communist threats to our security along our northern and north-eastern frontiers, where, for supplies of arms and ammunition, they can safely depend on communist arsenals in China. The whole situation thus raises a number of problems on which we must come to an early decision so that we can, as I said earlier, formulate the objectives of our policy and decide the method by which those objectives are to be attained. It is also clear that the action will have to be fairly comprehensive, involving not only our defence strategy and state of preparations but also problem of internal security to deal with which we have not a moment to lose. We shall also have to deal with administrative and political problems in the weak spots along the frontier to which I have already referred.

It is of course, impossible to be exhaustive in setting out all these problems. I am, however, giving below some of the problems which, in my opinion, require early solution and round which we have to build our administrative or military policies and measures to implement them.

i) A military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India both on the frontier and to internal security.

ii) An examination of military position and such redisposition of our forces as might be necessary, particularly with the idea of guarding important routes or areas which are likely to be the subject of dispute.

iii) An appraisement of the strength of our forces and, if necessary, reconsideration of our retrenchment plans for the Army in the light of the new threat.

iv) A long-term consideration of our defence needs. My own feeling is that, unless we assure our supplies of arms, ammunition and armour, we would be making our defence perpetually weak and we would not be able to stand up to the double threat of difficulties both from the west and north-west and north and north-east.

v) The question of China's entry into the UN. In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claim any longer. There would probably be a threat in the UN virtually to outlaw China, in view of its active participation in the Korean war. We must determine our attitude on this question also.

vi) The political and administrative steps which we should take to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontier. This would include the whole of the border, ie. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal territory in Assam.

vii) Measures of internal security in the border areas as well as the states flanking those areas such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam.

viii) Improvement of our communication, road, rail, air and wireless, in these areas and with the frontier outposts.

ix) The future of our mission at Lhasa and the trade posts at Gyangtse and Yatung and the forces which we have in operation in Tibet to guard the trade routes.

x) The policy in regard to the McMahon Line.

These are some of the questions which occur to my mind. It is possible that a consideration of these matters may lead us into

wider question of our relationship with China, Russia, America, Britain and Burma. This, however, would be of a general nature, though some might be basically very important, e.g., we might have to consider whether we should not enter into closer association with Burma in order to strengthen the latter in its dealings with China. I do not rule out the possibility that, before applying pressure on us, China might apply pressure on Burma. With Burma, the frontier is entirely undefined and the Chinese territorial claims are more substantial. In its present position, Burma might offer an easier problem to China, and therefore, might claim its first attention. I suggest that we meet early to have a general discussion on these problems and decide on such steps as we might think to be immediately necessary and direct, quick examination of other problems with a view to taking early measures to deal with them.

Vallabhbhai Patel,

7th November 1950

Extracts from Time Cover Story

January 27, 1947

Princes and Paupers. On the 17th anniversary of the Indian Congress' Purna Swaraj (complete independence) resolution of Jan. 26, 1930, India was almost completely free of Britain but in danger of lapsing into anarchy. The infant country faced these problems, among others:

- Hatred between the Hindu and Moslem communities, which flared last August into the Great Calcutta Killing when 6,000 died, has now hardened into a grim struggle over Pakistan.
- Rising prices and falling production have intensified the conflict between millions of the poorest and some of the richest people in the world. Strikes are bubbling all over India. Communist power is rising. The Congress Party is likely to split into right and left groups and the Moslems face a similar division.
- While Gandhi continues to attack industrialization, some of his most devoted followers go ahead with plans to make India the industrial heart of Asia.

- Freedom for India does not affect the princely states, where 93 million (25%) Indians live. These are more or less despotically ruled by an anachronistic group of princes who have, on the average, 11 titles, 5.8 wives, 12.6 children, and 3.4 Rolls-Royces. Sooner or later a free Indian nation will have to deal with them; right now the Communists are advocating expulsion of the princes.

Power is the Spur: To bring under control this vast interplay of seemingly irresistible forces and immovable bodies would take more than the fanaticism of Moslem Leaguer Mohamed Ali Jinnah, more than Jawaharlal Nehru's eloquent idealism more, perhaps, than Gandhi's combination of mysticism and manipulation. India needed an organizer.

It had one. Gandhi listened to God and passed on his political ideas to Vallabhbhai (rhymes with "I'll have pie") Patel; Patel, after listening to Gandhi, translated those ideas into intensely practical politics.

Patel has no pretensions to saintliness or eloquence or fanaticism. He is, in American terms, the Political Boss…

As Home and Information Minister of the new Central Government, as boss of the Congress Party, Patel represents what cohesive power Free India has. This cinder-eyed schemer is not the best, the worst, the wisest or the most typical of India's leaders, but he is the easiest to understand, and on him, more than on any man, except Gandhi, depends India's chance of surviving the gathering storms.

Interrupted Rubber: The first movement Patel ever organized was a student revolt against a teacher he accused of profiteering in pencils and paper. Later, Patel went to London, studied law 16 hours a day, topped the list in a bar examination and headed back for his beloved India without stopping to tour the Continent. He has never left India since.

His legal career was mainly defending murderers and bandits and frightening district magistrates with his caustic tongue. One magistrate, hearing that Patel was expanding his practice, moved his court to a town out of Patel's reach. In later years Gandhi found in Patel "motherly qualities" that eyes less inspired than the

Mahatma's never saw….Enemies and friends tell an anecdote of his criminal law days. He had just put his wife in a Bombay hospital, returned to Ahmedabad to argue a murder case. He was on his feet when a telegram arrived. He read that his wife had died, put the telegram into his pocket and went on with his argument as if he had never been interrupted.

In 1915 Patel was playing bridge in Ahmedabad's Gujarat Club when he first saw his fellow lawyer Gandhi, fresh from agitational triumphs in South Africa. At that time Patel dressed in fancy Western clothes and affected the manners of the most pukka sahib Briton. When his eyes fell upon Gandhi, Patel interrupted his game long enough to make a few scathing remarks. A year later he joined Gandhi's movement.

By 1927, when Patel had become the mayor of Ahmedabad, unofficial capital of Gujarati-speaking India, his extraordinary skill as an organizer showed itself for the first time during the great Gujarat floods. Every-thing broke down - transport, communications, all methods of distribution. The general Indian attitude used to be to regard such catastrophes as acts of God. What little relief there was usually came from a British Government which took its good time to relieve distress.

Patel initiated an unheard-of fund-raising drive for the relief of the flood victims. Supplies were moved into the flood areas by hundreds of volunteers wading through waist-deep water, carrying boxes and sacks on their heads. When lumber was required for constructing small bridges or building houses, Patel arranged for it all without making a single approach to the Government. It seemed a miracle to Indians when all the lumber arrived on the scene in the needed sizes. By the time the Bombay provincial representatives got there, no official assistance was needed.

Nothing like it had ever been seen before in India. Here at last was organization by and for Indians.

Somber Masterpiece: Now that India seems to require miracles of organization if its Government is to survive, Indians recall Patel's organizational masterpiece, the Bardoli no-tax campaign of 1928. Despite the fact that crops had been bad for several years

in the Bardoli district, a 25% tax increase was ordered by the Government assessors. This was precisely the opportunity Gandhi had been waiting for to launch the first real experiment in mass civil disobedience.

Patel Took Charge: Dressed in simple dhoti and shirt, he trudged from village to village, day after day, exhorting the peasants at every stop to stand fast and pay no taxes. "Some of you are afraid your land will be confiscated," he said in one speech. "What is confiscation? Will they take away your lands to England?" In another speech he set forth the principle that was to govern every Congress struggle of the future: "Every home must be a Congress office and every soul a Congress organization." Under Patel's orders the peasants' buffaloes, which the Government might have taken, were brought right into the peasants' houses. No servants would work for the Government collectors. Nobody would sell them food or give them water. Some property was, of course, confiscated and sold, but bidders were few. In all Bardoli not one rupee was collected in direct taxes.

A stunned Government finally asked Gandhi for terms. The upshot was a 6¼%, not a 25% increase in taxes. Patel emerged from Bardoli with a new and exalted status. He received the unofficial title of "Sardar," meaning captain or leader, which he has carried ever since.

Money Makes the Mare Go: After Bardoli, Patel became recognized as the Congress Party's chief organizer and disciplinarian. He checked up on what Gandhi's followers ate, drank, and wore. He passed on the party lists in provincial elections. He approved party-sponsored legislation, and personally drafted much of it. No detail was too unimportant or sordid for Boss Patel.

Recently he took charge of negotiations between the Congress Party Ministry in Bombay and the Western Indian Turf Association, which wanted to renew its license for the Bombay racetrack. Patel, who has never seen a horse race, knew what the traffic would bear. He upped the license fee from half a million rupees to three million.

Although he has handled millions in party funds, Patel has no personal love of money. With his daughter Maniben, who acts

as his secretary (she has accompanied him on most of his sojourns in British prisons), he now lives in a little suite in his son Dahyabhai's Bombay house. He eats little, drinks no alcohol, quit smoking when he first went to jail. In recent years he has had serious stomach trouble. His only exercise is a walk when he rises, at 4:30 a.m. His only recreation is bouncing a ball across the room to his grandchildren. He has never seen a movie. He cares little about the world outside his country. Of 300 books in his Bombay library, every one is by an Indian, mostly about India….

BEING A HISTORY OF THE BARDOLI SATYAGRAHA OF 1928 AND ITS SEQUEL

I never had the priviledge of taking part as "a combatant" in the Bardoli Satyagraha, which, whilst it was on, "paralysed the revenue administration" in the taluka, which made the taluka the cynosure of all eyes as much by its intensity as by its essential peaceful character, and which in its result proved to be "a blow to the regime of the Indian Civil Service." But I had certainly enough work as a "non-combatant" in the Satyagraha army, and because of my close association with the Sardar of the campaign had the pleasure and the priviledge of witnessing some of the moving scenes described in the following pages. The narrative therefore in an authentic and somewhat intimate record. As such it is likely to be of some value to all those who are interested in the method of Satyagraha as a weapon to secure justice and freedom.

I have purposely omotted so far as possible the names of all the subordinate officials who played their part in tha campaign. The wrting in these may not perhaps reveal a pen dipped in the ink of love - a positive and a most difficult virtue - but I hope there is nothing in the book which has the slightest trace of rancour or malice. The very battle was fought by a people utterly lacking in the spirit of hostility as the Broomfield Committee was agreeably surprised to testify.

Part I brings the narrative down to the close of the Satyagraha. Part II deals with the Enquiry and its result.

Mahadev Desai, 1929.

Revenue Facts and Revenue Terms

1. Bombay is a Ryotwari Province, i.e., a Province made up a numerous peasant proprietors holding land directly under Government and paying a fixed revenue levied on every survey number.
2. Section 107 of the Bombay Land Revenue Code often referred to in the book:

In revising assessments of land revenue regard shall be had to the value of land and, in case of land used for the purpose of agriculture, to the profits of agriculture: Provided that if any improvement has been effected in any land during the currency of any previous settlement made under this act, or under Bombay Act I of 1865, by or at the cost of the holder thereof, the increase in the value of such land or in the profit of cultivating the same due to the said improvement, shall not be taken into account in fixing the revised assessment thereof.

Assessment : Amount payable under the law by a substantive holder of the land.

Collector : Officer in charge of the revenue administration of a district.

Commissioner : Revenue head of one of the three divisions of the presidency.

Holding : Total land held or cultivated by an agriculturist.

Leased area : Area not cultivated by the substantive holders themselves but leased out to tenant cultivators.

Rent : Amount paid by a lessee for the right of cultivating the latter's land.

Revision : Revision of settlement of land revenue occuring every thirty years.

Survey numbers : Portion of land of which area and assessment are separately recorded.

Tenant : A lessee holding kand, under an instrument or oral agreement, from a substantive holder. 'Tenant' never means a lessee holding directly under Government. Bardoli came on the map quite suddenly and does not quite realize its position. The

Pioneer Bardoli (including Valod) is the easternmost taluka of the Surat district containing 137 villages, with an area of 222 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the river Tapti, beyond which is the Mandvi taluka of the Surat district, on the east and west by the territory of His Highness the Gayakwad of Baroda and on the south partly by the same territory and the Jalalpur taluka of the Surat distict.

The fact that a large part of the boundary of the taluka is formed by the Baroda territory is a feature of which the reader will notice the significance as he goesthrough the history of the Satyagraha. Two or three rivers much smaller than the Tapti cut through the taluka and run into the Arabian sea. Scarcely any of them is bridged, or fordable in the thick of the rainy season. The soil in the western part of the taluka is rich black yielding all varieties of crops (the staples being, juvari, cotton and rice), but the eastern villages are wild and rocky and poor, and have a scanty water supply and an inferior climate.

The bulk of the population of something over 87,000 are agriculturists. One looks in vain in the old settlement reports of the taluka for accurate figures of the population as divided into the principal communities - the Kanbis, Anavlas, Vanias and Kaliparaj (now known as the Raniparaj). But according to a rough estimate over half of the population is accounted for by the Kaliparaj, 11,000 being the Kaliparaj proper and thirty to forty thousand Dublas. There is a sprinkling of parsis and a small percentage of Musalmans. The first two communities are occupants and cultivators of the soil, the bulk of the Vanias are moneylenders and may be classed under the term non-agriculturists, and the Kaliparaj (including Chodhas, Dhudias, Gamits and Dublas) are the agricultural labourers in the taluka. The Dublas however are a class apart, and there is very little that is voluntary about their labour. They get married at the expense of their masters, get into their debt, and remain attached to the masters practically as their serfs. The Musalmans are also agriculturists, though some of them carry on petty trades, and the few families of Parsis in the taluka are canteen keepers and occupants o large holdings.

An average village in the Bardoli taluka is very much smaller than a village in the Kheda district. Some of the Bardoli villages

have as few as twenty-five or even ten houses, and though the density of population in the western villages is fairly high, there is nothing like the congestion that one finds in a Kheda village. The houses of the "higher" classes are tiled, have a front and back door and have large enclosures, but curiously enough the people accomodate their cattle also under the same roof as themselves.

These salient features indicate nothing unusual about the taluka. But one has to examine a little deeper to find out the distinctive features which have contributed to give Bardoli its place in the history of India.

Quite a considerable number of Gandhiji's Satyagrahis in South Africa were from Bardoli, and they had during that historical struggle given enough evidence of their courage and their determination. These included Kanbis, Anavlas and Musalmans who went there to try fortune and who have built up a considerable colony there. It was his familiarity with these Satyagrahis of Bardoli that led Gandhiji to approve of Bardoli as a suitable area in which to start his campaign of mass civil desobedience in 1921-1922. The idea ha to be dropped abruptly for reasons with which we are not here concerned, but the fact that it had the honour of being thus selected as the starting point of one of the biggest experiments in history remained, and though there was an inevitable lull among the people as a result of a sudden call-off of marching orders, the implications of the proposed step were not forgotten. Almost all the Patels in the taluka (most of them belonging to the Kanbi community) had delivered their letters of resignation to Gandhiji to be sent to the proper quarters at the opportune moment. Many villages had their national schools, and there was a better Khadi atmosphere in the taluka than elsewhere. A strong wave of social reform had passed over the Kaliparaj community, a large number of whom had taken solumn pledges to abjure liquor, toddy, etc. After Gandhiji's arrest the workers of Gujarat headed by Sjt.

Vallabhbhai Patel made it their objective to carry out the constructive programme in Bardoli, so that it might vindicate itself in history as the first place for civil desobedience chosen by Gandhiji. Four centres of work were therefore established in four directions of the taluka, where some of the picked workers went and settled themselves to work among the people. These centres

were at Bardoli, Sarbhon, Varad and Vankaner, places which have distinguished themselves in the Satyagraha of 1928. bardoli was the headquarters of their constructive activity, as it is the headquarters of the taluka, with a special training school of spinning, weaving and carpentry for the boys and youths of the Kaliparaj people. I have in a foregoing paragraph described these people by another name - Raniparaj.

Gujarat Anjumans Say an Emphatic no to the Cosmopolitan World Body

Who would have thought that the death knell of the infamous cosmopolitan world body would be sounded in a tiny hamlet of Gujarat, Bardoli. But then Bardoli is no stranger to fame. For it was from Bardoli that Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhai Patel lead the satyagraha movement for peaceful resistance against the British, almost a hundred years ago. It seems to me that there is that something in Bardoli that inspires one to stand up for what one believes in.

How else can one explain the phenomenal success of the Community meeting organized single handedly by the Bardoli Jarthosti Anjuman, to awaken the community to the dangers of the cosmopolitan world body? This tiny Anjuman with a large heart hosted over one thousand four hundred (1400) Parsis and Iranis, on February 26th and 27th, and took upon themselves the task of creating awareness in the community about this vital matter. The silent majority of the community made their strong presence felt that day. Coming from the far corners of Gujarat they passed a Resolution (with one lone dissenter), against the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India joining the cosmopolitan world body. This was after well known scholar Khojeste Mistree had taken them through a Power Point Presentation, done in Gujarati especially for the occasion, in which he analysed and dissected the Constitution of the controversial world body. The Presentation highlighted, 1) the marginalization of the BPP and the Federation of India in the world body, 2) the absence in the Constitution of the all-important Parsi/Irani identity, 3) the cosmopolitan nature of the body, as shown by the various Clauses that would make it possible for

converts to gain entry and the resultant adverse impact it would have on the community in India and elsewhere, and 4) the thus far unbroken link between the Parsi/Irani identity and the Zoroastrian religion, which they are seeking to break in this proposed world body.

Resolution after Resolution passed at various public meetings has rejected the very idea of this cosmopolitan body. At a Public Meeting organized by The Parsee Voice in Bombay, on Nov. 23rd 2003, 750 Parsis/Iranis present had passed a similar Resolution against joining the world body. At the meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India at Ahmedabad, 24 of the 29 anjuman representatives present, reiterated their opposition to it and forwarded their protest to the Chairman in writing. Since then, a remarkable fifty (50) of the 69 anjumans registered with the Federation have joined the opposition to the world body. If one considers that 13 of the 69 anjumans of FPZAI are defunct, in real term numbers this amounts to 50 out of 56 anjumans opposing the world body! If after all this, BPP spokesperson, Mr. Godrej Dotivala, says to the media, "they are in the minority", then it is obvious that Mr. Dotivala is deliberately misleading the media and through it, the community. Why doesn't Mr. Dotivala supply us with some proof of the "majority" he seems to think is for the cosmopolitan world body?

Coming back to Bardoli, what can I say? The tiny anjuman stole the show and our hearts. Their organizational skills were outstanding, their hospitality overwhelming and heartwarming, and the gaam nu bhonu, tastier than any lagan nu bhonu I've tasted this season. President of the anjuman Mr. Jamshed Mohta has wonderful ideas and big dreams for the community and has the confidence and ability to carry them through. MOHTA (meaning big) saheb's very name says it all; and his magnanimous actions match his name. Secretary of Bardoli Jarthosti Anjuman, Pervez Mehta is no less dynamic and he along with the other trustees and their families, all, opened up their homes and hearts to us. Underlying all the hard work put in by the Bardoli team was their strong commitment and deep concern for the community and if our leaders and BPP trustees had been there with us, they would have seen for themselves that the good food and great hospitality, though greatly appreciated, were not the crowd pulling attractions they have been made out to be. The common cause at the Bardoli meeting was concern for the religion; and belittling those who had gathered at Bardoli, in a desperate attempt to dismiss the opposition to the world body, is not only in very bad taste, but also rather ludicrous. (Both the editor of Jame as well as BPP spokesperson Dotiwala have made snide remarks in the media, insinuating that 1200 community members had trooped to Bardoli solely for the food!!)

The support from Surat (Trustees and community members alike) was united and strong. Poona too was well represented and stands firmly behind tradition. The Trustees of Poona have in fact ratified the stand taken by them at the Federation meeting (opposing the cosmopolitan world body) by passing a Resolution emphasizing the same, at their AGM. These are leaders working with transparency and accountability, in consonance with the sentiments of their constituents; and one salutes them for that!

Guest of honour, Vada Dastur Cyrus Dastur of Surat spoke passionately for preserving tradition and quoted extensively from the Scriptures to make his point. Chief Guest, illustrious industrialist Mr. Areez P. Khambatta captivated the audience with personal and professional tips on entrepreneurship; and having taken the lead in emphasizing the need for the community to form a Parsi/Irani world body to safeguard Parsi/Irani interests, he announced a personal donation of Rupees one crore towards a traditionally constituted Parsi/Irani world body that would uphold and preserve the tenets and traditions of our Religion and would function under the guidance of a Council of High Priests. WORLD ALLIANCE OF PARSI IRANI ZARTHOSTIS (WAPIZ) would be the voice of the Parsis/Iranis in the world. 18 year-old Zarvan Patvi provided a fitting finale when he requested the mike at the end of the Meet, to recite a few lines he had specially composed for the occasion. "I hope this message goes to the BPP and to all our other leaders" he said as he recited the couplets:

Na jaane din, na jaane dharam,

Na khuda no dar, na aankh maa sharam.

Nathi je-lokonaa tan per sadro, nathi je-lokonaa tan per kusti,

Evaaone laiyne vadhaarvaa chaaliya vasti.

Pasti na moole vechai jase tamaari hasti,

jo khuda ni saathe kari aavi harkat sasti.

Na bujhi chhe, na bujhse jyot maaraa Jarthosti Din ni.

Na bujhi chhe, na bujhse jyot maaraa Jarthosti Din ni; Jyaa sudhi

hamaaraa dil maa chhe aatash parasti,

Chhaiye hame Jarthosti.

The youth that came in large numbers to the meeting could teach many of us many a religious lesson.

Gujarat has said an emphatic NO to the cosmopolitan world body. Bardoli Jarthosti Anjuman (the small anjuman with the large heart), and the Parsis/Iranis of Navsari, Surat, Ahmedabad, Mt. Abu and a host of other anjumans in and around Gujarat, have stood up for what they believe in. Are our leaders listening?

Sardar Patel was one of Mohandas Gandhi's closest associates, and he organized and led several satyagrahas during India's struggle for freedom from British rule. When India achieved independence in 1947, Patel became Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and he presided over the most difficult task facing the nascent nation-state, namely the integration of over 500 princely states into the Indian Union.

Vallabhbhai Patel was born in Nadiad in present-day Gujarat in 1875. He completed his schooling in the local area and subsequently, in his 30s, he went to Britain; like many of his generation of political leaders, he qualified as a barrister. Patel returned to India around the same time as Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, on the eve of World War I, and the two met shortly thereafter.

Patel joined Gandhi in representing the weavers in the dispute with millowners in Ahmedabad in 1918, and he played a pivotal role in helping to redress the grievances of peasants in Kheda district. "I will say", wrote Gandhi in his autobiography, "that without the help of Vallabhbhai Patel, we should not have won the campaign. He had a splendid [law] practice, he had his

municipal work to do, but he renounced it all and threw himself in the campaign."

Patel was charged in 1928 with leading the difficult satyagraha at Bardoli, where again the colonial state was attempting to exact heavy taxes from an impoverished peasantry, and he acquitted himself brilliantly. In 1931, Patel was elected President of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi reposed great confidence in him through the three decades of their friendship.

Gandhi's assassination on 30 January 1948 at the hands of Nathuram Godse left Patel bereft of the guidance of "Bapu", his political mentor and the "Father of the Nation". [See also Vinay Lal, "'He Ram': The Politics of Gandhi's Last Words".] Patel was immensely shaken up and his own death, in late 1950, may have been hastened by the anxiety he experienced after Gandhi's death. The prevailing representations of Patel dwell almost exclusively on his political achievements, and it is not surprising that three generations of Indian school children have known Patel as the "Iron Man of India".

Everyone recognized his steely determination and pragmatism, and nowhere was this more visibly on display when, as Home Minister and Minister of States, he took decisive action to consolidate the Indian Union and authorized police action to merge Hyderabad into India. It has been suggested by some people that if Patel had been placed in charge of Kashmir, a "problem" which Nehru sought to tackle himself both as Prime Minister and as Minister of External Affairs, the crisis in Kashmir would have been resolved in India's favor a long time ago.

Though a staunch Hindu, Patel had a keen appreciation of the syncretic culture of India, and he recognized that India had furnished a hospitable home to adherents of various religions over the centuries. Patel contributed very substantially to the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, and it has not always been recognized that the protection and privileges guaranteed to minorities in the Indian Constitution under Articles 29 and 30 owe much to the vigilance of Patel.

Indeed, Patel, unlike some other Hindu leaders, was insistent that the right to proselytize should be recognized as part of the

right to freedom of religious worship. With respect to the position of Muslims, Sikhs, and other religious communities in India, Patel wrote that "it is up to the majority community, by its generosity, to create a sense of confidence in the minorities, and so also it will be the duty of the minority communities to forge the past . . ." His criticism of the use of violence to resolve political disputes bears a sharp contrast with the use of violence by religious extremists in India in recent years.

In 1949, an idol of Lord Ram was surreptitiously installed in the precincts of the Babri Masjid; writing to Govind Vallabh Pant, then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, on 9 January 1950, Patel encouraged him to prosecute violators of the law and perpetrators of violence. "I feel that the issue is one which should be resolved amicably," wrote Patel, "in a spirit of mutual toleration and goodwill between the two communities. . . . such matters can only be resolved peacefully if we take the willing consent of the Muslim community with us. There can be no question of resolving such disputes by force."

Patel desired nothing more than that the Indian nation-state should persevere and flourish. Nehru's biographer, S. Gopal, admitted that Patel's "major concern was national unity." Patel is still remembered as one of principal architects of Indian independence and one of the shapers of modern India. His devotion to the idea of the nation-state also points to the limitations of his thinking; unlike Gandhi, Patel could not think beyond the nation-state, and he was incapable of offering the critique of modernity that Gandhi pioneered.

Nor did Patel have the kind of far-reaching and complex views of science, industrial civilization, masculinity, or a whole host of other subjects on which Gandhi pondered for a considerable portion of his life. The characterization that has sometimes been used of Gandhi, namely that he was a doer rather than thinker, is in fact far more apposite of Patel.

In recent years, Patel's name has been abused and degraded by those who purport to act in his name, or who pretend that, since Patel was a staunch Hindu, he tolerated the neglect if not mistreatment of Muslims. It is true that even in his own lifetime,

there were rumors, particularly at the time of partition, that Patel was not sufficiently attentive to the plight of Muslims, and that he did not do enough in his capacity as Home Minister to ensure their safety.

This view rests largely on rumors and innuendoes, since Patel's own writings, including his correspondence, lend little if any support to the representation of him as a Hindu communalist. Gandhi himself never believed any of these rumors and, indeed, held Patel to the highest standards.

Some people even held Patel ultimately responsible for the assassination of Gandhi, and he is alleged to have not done enough to unearth the conspiracy to murder Gandhi after the initial plot of 20 January 1948, where police were able to hold Madanlal Pahwa captive, was foiled. Gandhi's "love for Muslims", in the language of his most ferocious opponents, is thought, on the communalist reading, to have left the Sardar unhappy.

But just how far the Hindutva appropriation of Patel, the consequences of which still remain to be unraveled, has gone can be seen in the disturbing fact that the murderous Narendra Modi, the butcher of Gujarat's Muslims, is gone on public record as having described himself as the "Chote Sardar" [small Sardar]. Unless one engages in a careful, hermeneutic, and dialectic reading of Patel, the 'iron' man who became one of the eminent followers of the preeminent practitioner and theorist of nonviolence, he too will disappear into the pantheon of martial Hindu heroes and the bottomless well of Hindutva chicanery.

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL - JOINING GANDHI

In 1918, he left his profitable practice, his large house and life of respect and comfort for the frugal living and hardship of Mahatma Gandhi's freedom movement. Patel had initially made fun of Gandhi's habits and points of view in front of friends like Ganesh Vasudev Mavlankar. But Patel was instantly transformed when Gandhi proposed a demonstration to protest the arrest of Annie Besant, instead of a signed petition. Gandhi's work in the Champaran Satyagraha convinced him that Gandhi was truly capable of achieving results for India's quest for freedom.

In addition, the elder man's pure adherence to Indian values, a simple, pious existence, and the soul-liberating cause of national independence set the caged peasant within Patel free. The pure freedom of living a virtuous life without submission to high society, classes, castes and the British Raj appealed strongly when it was personified in the life of the Mahatma. The hard life and high honor of the struggle, and a commitment to action not seen before in political leaders drew Patel personally and spiritually close to Gandhiji.

Sardar Patel never actually joined the Congress Party until after 1918. He became the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha, which became the Congress Party of Gujarat in 1920. He was elected its President, and served up till 1947.

Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas

Sardar Patel's first major participation was during the Kheda Struggle. The Kheda division of Gujarat was reeling under a severe drought and the peasants asked for relief from the high rate of taxes. Mahatma Gandhi had approved of a struggle there, but could not lead it himself due to his activities leading a similar movement in Champaran, Bihar. Asking for one Gujarati activist to volunteer full-time to the Kheda cause, Patel raised his hand and stood up.

Along with Narhari Parikh and Mohanlal Pandya, two former lawyers and students of Gandhi, Patel began a village-to-village tour, detailed grievances and asking villagers for their support for a state-wide revolt. All throughout the state, almost every villager, Hindu and Muslim backed Patel's efforts and leadership. Patel emphasized complete non-violence despite any provocation, and unity amongst all villagers. Patel was greatly assisted by nationalists like Abbas Tyabji and the Sarabhai family of Ahmedabad.

When revenue was refused, the government sent police and intimidation squads to seize property, including confiscating barn animals and whole farms. Thousands of activists and farmers were arrested, but almost no incident of violence from the villagers was reported. Many families throughout Gujarat attempted to help the resistors by supplying them with food, clothing and other necessities. The state's people socially boycotted and segregated

individuals and villages that supported the government and paid revenues. The revolt evoked great sympathy around India, but was not fought for the explicit cause of Indian independence.

The revolt ended in 1919, when the government compromised and suspended payment of revenue, even scaling back the rate. Vallabhbhai Patel emerged as an icon and hero to Gujaratis, admired and hailed by Indian leaders throughout India, especially by his mentor, Mahatma Gandhi.

In the years between 1919 and 1928, Patel worked extensively against untouchability, alcoholism, ignorance and poverty. He was elected the President of the Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad in 1922.

In 1928, Bardoli suffered from a similar predicament. In this case, the revenue hike was steeper, and the famine worse and covered a large portion of Gujarat. Patel organized the first revolt since the suspension of civil resistance in 1922, and became a hero to the whole nation. The revenue refusal was even stronger here than in Kheda, and many sympathy satyagrahas were undertaken in different parts of Gujarat.

In both cases, after the revolt had ended, Patel worked hard to make sure each farmer got his lands and property back.

It was with his work in Bardoli, that Gujaratis and people across the country began referring to him as the Sardar, or Leader. His work won him the loyalty of thousands of Gujarati freedom-fighters and the Gujarat Congress Party, and the love and adoration of millions of people in Western India.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

Sardar Patel became the President of the Indian National Congress in 1931, at the dawn of the Civil Disobedience Movement, or Salt Satyagraha. Patel organized Congress work before being arrested by police. He served his sentence with Gandhi in the Yeravda Jail till 1934. Gandhi and Patel grew very close, personally and spiritually in this time. Patel served Gandhi, affectionately looking after his personal needs, and Gandhi encouraged Patel to learn Sanskrit and read great Hindu epics. The two discussed many aspects of the freedom struggle, Indian history and national

issues. Gandhi was especially proud of Patel's work in Gujarat, and of the inestimable help he was giving Gandhi in the work of revolution.

POWER WITHIN THE CONGRESS

Sardar Patel was Gandhiji's right-hand man, and Congress Party chief. He commanded the wide loyalty and respect of the millions of Congressmen who had fought in the hot sun and been beaten, tortured and imprisoned for many years. He was Gujarat's chief, and no other Congress leader, not even Gandhiji could have overcome his strength in his home state. His great integrity, strict discipline and adherence to core principles of the struggle, complete disinterest in office and power as such, and fatherly care for his associates and fellow Congressmen made him the only man capable of standing up to Gandhiji. Thus even though he had been Congress President only once in 1931, he remained its second-most important leader after Gandhiji, exceeding the younger and charismatic Jawaharlal Nehru in authority and influence within the party and in government. It was acknowledged by many veteran freedom-fighters and his British opponents that only Sardar Patel could stand up to Gandhiji in a contest for the loyalty of most Congressmen and Indians. No one was a stronger ally of the Mahatma. Patel would break many other bonds of power, office, leadership, friendship and family before splitting from the Mahatma. Throughout his life, he viewed himself as a "soldier in Bapu's Army." He enjoyed a close spiritual bond with the Mahatma, and the Gandhi-Patel relationship has been described as one of older and younger brothers. In Indian society, the older brother is a father-figure, with the younger brother bound with love, loyalty and respect to him.

Sardar Patel assumed a wide range of responsibilities by raising funds for the Party from businessmen and sympathizers, developing an election strategy and selecting candidates for the provincial and central elections of 1934 and 1937 under the Government of India Act 1935, and guiding the work of many Congress organizations dedicated to social upliftment and service. He was the guide and boss of the various Congress Ministries that took power in the provinces in the 1930s - never indulging in

power and interfering in the work of public service, but holding an iron discipline over the ministers, preventing the British thus from dividing the leaders and ruling, and any corruption of power from hurting the purity of the overall cause for freedom.

In the eyes of some people, Patel gained infamy when he reprimanded P.F. Nariman, a Parsee Congress leader who coveted the premiership of Bombay, and Khare, another politician seeking the premiership of the Central Provinces. Both had tried to divide the party to unseat the preference of national party leaders, and to Patel, divide-and-rule was absolutely unacceptable. But his measures to oust both from were criticized as authoritarian and dictatorial by some in the press.

Quit India

Sardar Patel strongly supported Gandhi's call for a final, definitive struggle to obtain the exit of the British in India, after he realized that the British would not reward India with freedom even if India supported Britain in the World War II. Patel's support was critical, since the movement was received with criticism and caused many political divisions and controversy.

Although Nehru and Maulana Azad backed the struggle, it was Patel's leadership that mobilized hundreds of thousands of Congress supporters, especially in latter-day Mumbai, Gujarat and Maharashtra. After making a fiery speech in Mumbai to a crowd over 100,000 strong, Patel energized thousands of nationalists, removing political exhaustion, division and confusion.

Quit India became the most dangerous revolt in the history of the country. Hundreds of thousands of people courted arrest, and whole cities and provinces shut down. But the British did succeed, by rigorous imposition of martial law, in breaking the strength of the revolt by 1944. Thousands of protestors were killed, and over 100,000 arrested in the process.

Patel and the entire Congress Working Committee was jailed in Ahmednagar till 1946. In these years, Patel was recorded as having kept up the spirits of his comrades by constant care and service to them. Patel and the others were released by early 1946. The revolt and the war had exhausted Britain, and negotiations were about to begin for the future independence of India.

Personal Life

Vallabhbhai Patel was an extremely reserved man committed to his family and friends. After joining the freedom struggle, he would frequently live in Gandhi's ashrams, or with his close friends in Gujarat. From the 1920s till his death, his daughter Manibehn Patel would closely attend to his personal needs and often act as a right-arm. Vallabhbhai's son Dahyabhai Patel worked for an insurance company in Mumbai, where Vallabhbhai would often live. However, Vallabhbhai was angered once by Dahyabhai's request that he use his political influence to obtain a loan crucial to his business's survival, even though he promised to return it immediately. Patel would be protective of his integrity and reputation as far as possible.

His colleagues like Narhari Parikh, Mohanlal Pandya, Ganesh Vasudev Mavlankar, Ravi Shankar Vyas and Mahadev Desai would become very close and dear friends to him. Officials like V.P. Menon and H.M. Patel and his private secretary Vidya Shankar would grow a deep, personal admiration and a relationship of trust and reverence for Patel. Patel was also close to the Birla family and the family of Ambalal Sarabhai, a prominent Gujarati industrialist. His personal friends not from the political world were Dr. Kanuga and his wife, who were neighbors in Ahmedabad.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA

Historians consider that Vallabhbhai Patel's most important contributions came in the period between 1946 and 1948, when the Congress negotiated India's independence; when the Partition of India took place, and India's independence was greeted by intensive communal violence, an exodus of 10 million people, war over Kashmir and the pending integration of 565 princely states.

The Congress Presidency

Patel famously stepped down in favor of Nehru from the 1946 election for the Congress Presidency, upon the request of Gandhi. Patel had the support of 11 out of 15 Congress Party provincial organizations, while Nehru had none. The election's importance is in the fact that the elected man would lead free India's first Government. Gandhi is often criticized for not backing Patel, a

battle-hardened leader who had the support of the entire Congress Party. But Patel respected Gandhi's judgment, and knew that he did not have Nehru's assets: health and youth, mass popularity and a likeable image with the country's Muslims and youth.

But until his death, Gandhi's true wish was that Patel and Nehru head the Government together, and that the distinction be only titular. Patel took the most powerful portfolio, the Home Ministry, and retained his control over the organization of the Congress Party.

The Partition of India

Sardar Patel was one of the first Congress leaders to accept partition of India as a solution to the rising Muslim separatist movement led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah. He was greatly angered by Jinnah's wrecking of attempted coalitions between his party and the Congress, and by his embrace of violence, such as the Direct Action Day, when over 5,000 people were killed in violence instigated by Jinnah. But he was also aware that Jinnah did enjoy popular support amongst Muslims, and that an open conflict between him and the nationalists could degenerate into a Hindu-Muslim civil war of disastrous proportions and consequences.

When Nehru and the others had approved the idea, it was Patel who took the job of convincing a deeply saddened Gandhi of the inevitability of partition as the pragmatic solution.

Patel also represented India in the Partition Council, watching over the fairness of the division of assets and government machinery. With Pakistan being the smaller country with a smaller population, Patel made sure Jinnah did not obtain more resources for his state than was justifiable. Nehru and Patel jointly named India's first Council of Ministers. Patel took the Ministry for Home Affairs, and the title of Deputy Prime Minister.

At 72, Patel assumed theHimalayan responsibilities of the integration of 565 princely states into the Union, advancing democracy and self-government in these fiefdoms, developing the national security apparatus and strategy, and welding Bharat into one, united country. Patel would assume a leading role in writing the free nation's Constitution as well, responsible for inculcating separation of powers, religious freedom and equality

(ironically, he was often portrayed with an anti-Muslim bias) and the right to property.

KASHMIR BENGAL REFUGEE CRISIS AND RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN

When a tribal invasion of the Himalayan kingdom of Kashmir began in September 1947, with Pakistani tribesmen and soldiers under Major General Akbar Khan of the Pakistani Army, Patel immediately wanted to send troops into Kashmir. But agreeing with Nehru and Mountbatten, he waited till Kashmir's monarch had acceeded to India. Patel then oversaw India's military operations to secure Srinagar, the Baramulla Pass and the forces retrieved a lot of territory from the invaders. Patel, along with Defence Minister Baldev Singh administered the entire military effort, arranging for troops from different parts of India to be rushed to Kashmir, and for a major military road connecting Srinagar to Pathankot be built in 6 months.

Patel strongly advised Nehru against arbitration from the United Nations, insisting that Pakistan had been wrong to support the invasion and the accession to India was valid. Patel did not want foreign inteference in a bilateral affair.

Patel also strongly criticized the release of Rs. 55 crores to the Government of Pakistan, convinced that the money would go to finance the war against India in Kashmir. The Cabinet had approved his point, but it was all reversed when Gandhi went on a fast-unto-death to obtain the release. Gandhi was worried that economic turmoil in Pakistan would make it more aggressive, increasing Hindu-Muslim violence which had already killing 1 million people and was just calming down. Gandhi obtained the release, as well as a commitment from Hindus and Muslims of Delhi to end all communal violence. Patel, though not estranged from Gandhi, was deeply hurt at the total rejection of his personal counsel and a Cabinet decision.

In 1949, a crisis arose when the number of Hindu refugees entering West Bengal, Assam and Tripura from East Pakistan climbed over 800,000. The refugees in many cases were being forcibly evicted by Pakistani authorities, and were victims of intimidation and violence.

Against Patel's advice and calls from Indian nationalists, Nehru invited Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan to find a peaceful solution. Despite his aversion, Patel met Khan and discussed the matters. Patel strongly criticized, however, Nehru's intention to sign a pact that would create minority commissions in both countries and pledge both India and Pakistan to a commitment to protect each other's minorities. Patel amongst others saw this as appeasement. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and K.C. Neogy, two Bengali ministers resigned from the Cabinet, and Nehru became a hated figure in West Bengal. The pact was immediately in jeopardy.

Patel however, publicly came out to Nehru's aid. He gave emotional speeches to members of Parliament, and the people of West Bengal. He spoke with scores of delegations of Congressmen, Hindus, Muslims and other public interest groups, persuading them to give peace a final effort. The Pact was at last approved and within a year, most of the Hindu refugees had returned to Pakistan.

POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND CONSTITUTION

During the transition period before Independence, assisted by civil servant V.P. Menon, Patel worked towards the integration of the numerous Indian states into the Indian union. Patel and Menon persuaded the princes of 565 states of the impossibilty of independence from the Indian republic, especially in the presence of growing opposition from their subjects. He also proposed favourable terms for the merger, including creation of privy purses for the descendants of the rulers. While encouraging the rulers to act with patriotism, Patel did not rule out force, setting a deadline of August 15, 1947, for them to sign the instrument of accession document.

All but three of the states willingly merged into the Indian union leading to the comment that Patel liquidated the princely states without liquidating the princes. Only Jammu and Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad did not fall into his basket.

Jungadh was especially important to Patel, since it was in his home state of Gujarat. The Nawab had under pressure from Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto acceeded to Pakistan. It was however, quite

far from Pakistan and 80% of its population was Hindu. Patel combined diplomacy with force, demanding that Pakistan annul the accession, and that the Nawab accede to India. He sent the Army to occupy three principalities of Junagadh to show his resolve. Following wide-spread protests and the formation a civil government, or Arzi Hukumat, both Bhutto and the Nawab fled to Karachi, and under Patel's orders, Indian Army and police units marched into the state. A plebiscite later organized produced a 99.5% vote for merger with India.

Hyderabad was the largest of the princely states, and included parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra states. Its ruler, the Nizam was Muslim, although over 80% of its people were Hindu. The Nizam sought independence or accession with Pakistan. Militant Muslims called the Razakars, under Qasim Razvi pressed the Nizam to hold out against India, while organizing attacks with militant Communists on people on Indian soil. Even though a Standstill Agreement was signed due to the desperate efforts of Lord Louis Mountbatten to avoid a war, the Nizam always rejected deals and changed his positions. Finally, in September 1948, Patel reconciled Nehru and the Governor-General, Chakravarti Rajgopalachari, and sent in the Indian Army to integrate Hyderabad. After Operation Polo commenced, thousands of Razakar militants had been killed, but Hyderabad was comfortably secured into the Indian Union. Despite his anger at the Nizam, Patel retained him as the ceremonial chief of state, and held talks with him where the Nizam apologized to Patel, who graciously defused the rivalry.

Unlike Nehru and Gandhi, Patel was not initially interested in Kashmir acceeding to India, due to its Muslim-majority population. But when Pakistan's Governor-General Muhammad Ali Jinnah encouraged the accession of two Hindu-majority states, Junagadh and Hyderabad to Pakistan, Patel felt the need to punish Pakistan for its hypocrisy and its efforts to destabilize India. He however made no particular effort to court Kashmir's ruler, a Hindu. Patel was a senior member of the Constituent Assembly of India, and headed several important committees that decided the upcoming Constitution's articles on civil freedoms. Patel backed widespread personal freedoms, with protective authority to the

Government. He strongly defended a nationalized civil service, and inserted the privy purse clause and right to property as well.

RELATIONS WITH NEHRU

Sardar Patel's relationship with Nehru has always been a source of controversy and intense historical interest. But it's most important phase came between 1947 to 1950, India's first years as a free nation.

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Nehru and Patel formed the Triumvirate which ruled India. Prime Minister Nehru was intensely popular with the masses, but did not enjoy the enormous loyalty and respect Patel had for his political judgment, leadership and integrity within the Congress Party and among most Indian nationalists. Even the British were forced to admit that Patel was the only leader capable of standing up to Gandhi, and the most dangerous as well. Patel was intensely loyal to Gandhi, and both he and Nehru looked to him to arbitrate disputes.

Nehru and Patel sparred intensely over national issues. Patel objected to Nehru overruling his Home Ministry's officials, such as sending his own representative to Ajmer, the scene of communal violence, despite a senior Ministry official having already gone there and Patel himself personally briefing Nehru. Nehru had not bothered to inform Patel of his intentions. Nehru felt offended by Patel making important decisions regarding the states integration without reference to him or the Cabinet.

Beneath this lay core ideological differences. Patel was a Hindu who was proud of ancient traditions and Indian culture. He was from the sturdy peasantry of Gujarat, who proudly owned and worked their lands. Nehru was a socialist who despised rituals and religious dogma, who was rich and Westernized in thinking, attitude and mannerism.

An exasperated Patel did not want to battle Nehru, and asked Gandhi to relieve him. He did not have Nehru's youth and popularity, which would overtake him in time, and he knew that an open political battle would hurt India. After much personal deliberation and contrary to Patel's judgment, Gandhi on January 30, 1948 told Patel not to leave the Government, and to stay by

Nehru's side. India, according to Gandhi, desperately needed the joint leadership, and Patel. He was assassinated just an hour afterwards. Patel was the last man to have had an intimate conversation with the Mahatma.

At Gandhi's wake, Nehru and Patel embraced each other, and addressed the nation together. However, criticism soon arose from the media and other politicians that Patel's Home Ministry had failed to protect Gandhi. An emotionally exhausted Patel wrote out a letter of resignation, offering to leave the Government despite Gandhi's word so that he may not embarrass Nehru's administration any further. Patel's secretary convinced him to withhold the letter, seeing it as fodder for Patel's enemies and political conflict in India.

Nehru sent Patel a personal letter dismissing any idea of personal differences and that he wanted Patel to leave. He reminded Patel of their 30 year partnership in the freedom struggle, and that after Gandhi's death, it was especially wrong for them to quarrel. Moved, Patel personally and publicly endorsed Nehru's leadership and refuted any suggestion of discord.

Patel dispelled any notion that he would like to be India's Prime Minister. He recognized Nehru's importance, and his sacred word to Gandhi. The two committed themselves to joint leadership, and non-interference in Congress party affairs.

However, the two would criticize each other in matters of policy. Nehru remained an opponent of Patel's plan to forcibly integrate Hyderabad, and against Patel's advice asked for the United Nations to arbitrate the Kashmir dispute. The former Nehru had to conceed in 1948, and the latter became a source of intense criticism in the years afterward.

Nehru also resisted Patel's counsel on sending assistance to Tibet, which had been invaded by China, and ejecting the Portuguese from Goa by military force. The former resulted in the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the latter was done by Nehru himself in 1961. Patel did not himself force the issue at the time.

But Patel did not help Nehru when he had purposely bypassed him, only later to need his help. Nehru attempted to oppose the will of a majority of Congressmen by suggesting that Governor

General Chakravarti Rajgopalachari become India's first President. Nehru's arbitrariness and imposition angered the party, which backed its favorite, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Patel did not help Nehru to win his way, and Prasad became the President of India in 1950. Nehru also opposed the 1950 Congress presidential candidacy of Purushottam Das Tandon, a Hindu conservative leader. Endorsing Jivatram Kripalani himself, Nehru attempted to thwart Tandon's bid, threatening to resign if he were elected. The party voted for Tandon, and Patel endorsed Tandon in Gujarat, where Kripalani received not one vote despite hailing from that state himself.

Patel also personally encouraged Nehru and assured him that he should continue as Prime Minister after Prasad's election to the Presidency, which had made Nehru feel that the party was revolting.

SARDAR PATEL TO HINDUS AND MUSLIMS

Many people see the Sardar as a man opposed to Muslims and pro-Hindu. Patel had no such animosity in his heart, nor did he view events in terms of religious identity.

Sardar Patel fiercely opposed the demand of the Muslim minority to be treated on a preferential basis as compared to the Hindu majority. Patel was merely defending the Congress policy of equal freedom for all, but he acquiesed to a division of the country after an increasingly violent and destructive campaign for Pakistan proved to command the support of a vast majority of Muslims, and threatened to degenerate into a mass civil war; an eventuality abhorrent to veterans of the non-violent struggle for freedom.

During the partition riots and the massive exoduses of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims from Pakistan and India respectively, Sardar Patel organized the police and Army strategy to curb violence, and several government organizations providing relief to refugees. He personally visited a heavily Muslim area of the city of Delhi to calm the nervous people, who feared a bloody attack by Hindu extremists. Disorder was put down by an iron hand as soldiers shot to death any rioter or murderer, Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. In action, if not in words, Sardar Patel thus guaranteed the safety of Muslims without overlooking the national interest.

In words, Sardar Patel often appealed to Muslims to make a final choice and stick with it: if they chose to go to Pakistan, go and live in peace. If they chose to live in India, do so with absolute loyalty and pride. This logical and straight-forward leadership brought criticism, but also comforted tens of millions of Hindus around the country who were traumatized and enraged by partition and violence. Although the anger of an extremist minority claimed Mahatma Gandhi's life, he and Sardar Patel prevented the whole country from being consumed by communal hate.

The Sardar decided to forcibly annex Junagadh and Hyderabad only after their rulers proved oppressive to the majority of the people, anti-democratic and anti-national. He would not let Jinnah and Pakistan weaken the Union by supporting stooge states in its heart. At the time of the annexation of Junagadh and Hyderabad, the Indian Muslims roundly backed the Sardar's actions and policies, raising the Sardar's hopes for India's future.

Patel knew that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was responsible for helping Hindu and Sikh refugees coming in from Pakistan, and he admired the the discipline of RSS cadets. However, he expressed clearly that no private army-type organization would be tolerated in India, and holding talks with Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the RSS chief, made the RSS adopt a written Constitution, increase organization democracy, and officially pledge loyalty to India's flag and constitution. Patel publicly clarified on many occasions that it was not the RSS, but the Hindu Mahasabha which was to blame for Gandhi's murder.

LAST YEARS AND LEGACY

Sardar Patel had been the last man to see and talk to Gandhi before his brutal murder on January 30, 1948. The Mahatma had asked Sardar Patel to stay on in government in support of the Prime Minister Nehru, and to provide the joint national leadership that the country was in dire, crucial need of to survive as a free nation.

Gandhi's Death and Heart Attack

The death of the man for whom he gave up a life of comfort to withstand 30 years of hardship, jail and overcome terrible trials

of fate and history, deeply hurt Patel. At Gandhi's funeral, the Sardar gave solace, support and leadership to many Congressmen, associates, friends and the wider population. He addressed the nation with Nehru, and immediately moved to forestall retaliation against the political body that the assassin belonged to and wider violence. He also made it clear that the assassin was a Hindu, to prevent riots against the Muslim community. But within two months of the murder, he had a major heart attack that unleashed the massive bottled-up grief. Thanks to the presence of his caring daughter, his loyal secretary and nurse, his life did not end sooner than it ultimately did.

Airplane Crash

Patel also underwent a harrowing experience when a plane carrying him and the Maharaja of Patiala crashed in the desert of Rajasthan. No one was hurt, but the nation had panicked over the disappearance of Patel's plane. When he returned to Delhi, members of Parliament and thousands of Congressmen gave him a raucous welcome, and in Parliament, proceedings stopped for half an hour while the MPs gave a thunderous ovation to Patel.

Passing

Sardar Patel died in Mumbai (then Bombay) on December 15, 1950, after suffering a massive second heart attack. He was 75 years old. Just 11 months earlier, Bharat had adopted its Constitution, and become a Republic. Till his last few days, he was constantly at work as Home Minister, redeeming to his absolute last, his pledge to Mahatma Gandhi to stand by Prime Minister Nehru and provide the joint leadership that the country was crucially in need of in its first turbulent years since the birth of freedom.

Memorial

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is remembered across India as a man who exemplified of immense personal character, integrity, courage and determination against all odds throughout his life. In Gujarat, he is especially fondly remembered and idolized. He was officially awarded the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian honor, posthumously in 1991. His official birthday, October

31st each year is Sardar Jayanti, a national holiday in India. In 1993, the film Sardar was released which sketched his life and work. The film was produced and directed by Ketan Mehta and noted Indian actor Paresh Rawal played the lead role. It focused on Patel's leadership in the years leading up the Indian independence, especially the partition of India, and its political integration, and Patel's relationship with Nehru.

Lionized in Gujarat, his birthplace in the village of Karamsad is still preserved in his memory. The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad serves as the state's gateway to the world. The Sardar Patel College of Engineering in Mumbai is one of the nation's premier engineering schools. A highly prestigious school, the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya was established in 1960 by his name in New Delhi. And the major Sandhurst Road along which he lived in his family's flat on Mumbai's eastern coast, is today the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Road.

Family

Manibehn Patel lived in a flat in Mumbai for the rest of her life following her father's death, and often led the work of the Sardar Patel Memorial Trust and other charitable organizations, but kept out of politics in general. Dahyabhai Patel was a businessman, and eventually went on to serve in the Lok Sabha, lower house of Parliament as an MP in the 1960s.

FARMERS' MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The farmers in India had to undergo great struggle in all the states to stop exploitation by the Jagirdars and Zamindars. Some of the movements were successful, but others failed. The farmer movements in 1907 under the leadership of Sardar Ajit Singh and in 1921 under Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were successes, but others, such as the revolts in Chauri Chaura, Avadh and Mopla, were great losses.

At the global level the French Revolution had changed the course of history, as it was the working class which became the vanguard of revolution in Europe. During the first half of the 20th century, national liberation struggles started against colonisation. In these colonies, very little industry was present and their working class, if it existed at all, was still in infancy, making the impetus for these rebellions have to come from somewhere else. It was Mao's peasant revolution in China which became a catalyst for national liberation movements in many colonies, including India.

Farmer Movements in Punjab

It was in Punjab that India's first farmers' movement emerged. The role played by Ghadar party, led by Raja Mahendra Pratap, in the political awakening of India was an important step. The Sikhs of Punjab were the first to migrate to the United States and Canada in the 19th century. They financed and helped the formation of Ghadar party which when gave the call to Indians abroad to return home and fight British imperialism, had its call immediately heeded to. The majority of those who did return, 8000 of them comprised Punjab's Sikhs. Despite its apparent failure, the Ghadar Movement was to have a powerful impact on Punjab politics and especially on the peasants. It established a tradition of militant and secular anti-imperialism, enriched in subsequent years by social radicalism, which was to continue to inspire subsequent generations.

The peasant conferences were held in Lahore, Faislabad, Lyallpur and other places of West Punjab -- the most famous of them being 1938-39 Long Morcha in Lahore when peasants from all over Punjab courted arrests for nine months in front of the assembly building. The slogan of Pagri Sambhal O jatta (Hold your head high, O peasant) was first raised at a mass gathering in Lyallpur in 1907. Ten Thousand people -- the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs alike -- attended this gathering.

Farmers' Movements in Gujarat

Mahatma Gandhi had led two great revolts of communities of poor Indian farmers against the tyranny of the British government and allied landlords in Champaran, Bihar, and Kheda, Gujarat. Success in both struggles had helped win the farmers economic and civil rights, and electrified India's people.

In 1920, the Indian National Congress under Gandhi's leadership launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. Millions of Indians revolted against the British, boycotting the courts,

government services, schools and disavowing titles, pensions and British clothes and goods. The freedom fighters, known as Satyagrahis, peacefully protested authoritarian British laws, and called for India's independence. Many thousands were beaten, tortured and arrested.

Farmer Movements in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is known as the land of kings and palaces and whose history is replete with encomium of their kings, the land known for "Sati", the land known for its vast tracts of deserts was witness to a history in making, the successful agitation of farmers and peasants for their right to livelihood.

The twenty-two princely states of erstwhile Rajputana state did not form a common political collectivity which can be termed as a unified political action model. Each state had its own territorial area, which was exclusive politically in that it had its separate administration nag and army. Each state retained its cultural and linguistic distinctiveness.

Political authority varied from ruler to ruler depending upon the terms of contract or covenant with the paramount power dating back to the period of subsidiary alliance of Lord Wellesley. Obviously in a state like this, the freedom movement was bound to be divided and segmented, depending upon the degree of unity and cohesiveness among political players in each state. The two states of Jaipur and Jodhpur provided differential patterns of political movements.

Justice Kan Singh Parihar , the retired Judge of High Court of Rajasthan, has written about exploitation of farmers by Jagirdars prior to Independence as under:

"Every thing that the Kisan had, never treated as his own. In Jagir areas all cultivators were really landless. There was no tenancy law and one could be thrown away from the land one cultivated at the pleasure of Jagirdar, his "malik". In most of the Jagirs a Jagirdar would in the first instance be taking fifty percent of the produce. This would be taken by actual division of the produce on the thrashing floor or by appraisal of the standing crop (kunta). Then over and above the share of the produce the Kisan had to pay numerous "lags" or cesses. Together with the share of the produce known as "Hasil" these cesses meant that the Kisans had to part with more than eighty percent of their produce. The findings of the Sukhdeonarain Committee in the years 1940-42 bear this out. If a Kisan had to marry his daughter he had to pay "Chavri Lag", if he held a dinner then a "Kansa Lag"; if members of the family separated then "Dhunwa Lag" and so on. If the Jagirdar had a guest then fodder for his mount had to be supplied. Then there was "begar" that is forced labour, for tilling the personal lands of the Jagirdar. The homestead in which the Kisan lived in the Abadi had to be vacated in case he ceased cultivating the land. He could not alienate the plot to anyone."

Shri Kan Singh Parihar played a great role in drafting and enactment of Marwar Tenancy Act of 1949 and Marwar Land Revenue Act of 1949. Shri Parihar's idea of fixing all tenants in cultivatory possession as Khatedars thus making all of them almost the proprietors of all their fields, wells etc. without paying any premium or compensation and further being relieved from paying any lag bag (Cesses) etc., impacted these documents. This Marwar Tenancy Act of 1949 and Marwar Land Revenue Act of 1949 became a role model for the Rajasthan Assembly in 1955 and similar laws were passed based on these Acts, thus greatly benefiting the farmers of Rajasthan.

Shekhawati Farmers' Movement

The farmers of the Sekhawati region are considered to be the most advanced in the state of Rajasthan. The Shekhawati region has the highest literacy in the state. The most dominating farmer community in the rural areas of Shekhawati is Jat. The Jats are politically and economically very sound. The major land holdings in the present times are with Jats. Then comes the Rajput community who were the jagirdars before independence. The farmers of the region have done great struggle to come to the present status.

Before independence the conditions of the farmers were worst. The farmers of the Shekhawati region were exploited and oppressed by the Jagirdars during British Raj. They were deprived of fundamental rights. They were given inhuman treatment when

the Jagirdars did not get cesses known as tax or unpaid work in time, they were given hard punishments and their crop used to be destroyed. There were 37 kinds of work without pay prevalent in Shekhawati. A newly married bride was forced to go first to Jagirdar.

The Shekhawati Jat farmers' movement had its genesis in the Jat Praja Pati Maha-Yagna a socio-religious festival held in January, 1934. It lasted ten days and was the biggest of its kind in Rajputana. It facilitated a widespread involvement of Jats in a community festival. Each Jat household attending it was to contribute some cash and an unspecified quantity of ghee. A total of two hundred maunds of ghee were used in the sacrificial flame. The function concluded with a triumphal elephant ride hitherto prohibited by the rules of Sikar Thikana. The success of this movement encouraged the Jats to hold more meetings on local levels and print literature to glorify Jat history. The Yagna became a dominant symbol of folklore which glorified it as the beginning of an anti-feudal struggle. The peasants demanded remissions in taxes and finally a Jat-Sikar Thikana Agreement was signed on August 23, 1934, by which the Thikana authorities conceded to abolish various lags (taxes) and agreed to provide for a mobile dispensary. The following year, the Kisan Sabha formally came into existence and under its aegis the famous Sikar Andolan of 1935 was launched. With outside mediation efforts of Jamnalal Bajaj, Sir Chhotu Ram - a renowned Jat leader of Punjab and Ratan Singh of All India Jat Mahasabha, a settlement was arrived at and the Jats were promised remissions of rent, abolition of internal cesses and an introduction of fixed rent tenure.

The Jats were also promised equal opportunities in Thikana administration and were permitted to ride elephants and horses and to construct schools for their children. The formation of a Jat Kisan Panchayat was officially sanctioned and the right to agitate for redressal of grievances in non-Khalsa areas was conceded. Much however, could not be made out of these agreements for two reasons. First, the subordinate Thikanedars of Sikar did not fully cooperate with Sikar authorities to ensure compliance with the terms of these agreements. Secondly, the beginning of settlement operations and reform of revenue administration was

a time-consuming process which entailed enormous delay. This was interpreted by the Jats as a breach of agreement and hence, they indulged in acts of disorder and violence, which were perceived by Thikana authorities as signs of bad faith. In the meanwhile two unsavoury incidents led to a termination of agreements.

The first, occurred at Khudi village, where the sight of Jat bridegroom riding a horse incensed the local Rajputs and the two sides readied themselves for an armed combat. The state authorities asked the two parties to disperse but the Jats refused. The state police charged and in the melee that followed, several people were injured. The second incident took place at Kudan village, where about one hundred armed Jats attacked Sikar revenue officials. The police fired upon the armed mob, which resulted in several casualties and injuries. A total of 104 Jats were arrested.

Farmers of the Shekhawati, mainly the Jats, united against oppression of Jagirdars by forming 'Sikar Jat-Kisan-Panchayat' and stopped giving "lags" or cesses to the Jagirdards. The 'Jaipur Praja-Mandal' also supported the Shekhawati farmers' movement against abolition of Jagirdari system. The leaders of 'Bijoria-Kisan-Movement' of 1922, 1931, and 1932 supported the movement of Shekhawati farmers. The Jagirdars tried to suppress the movement in many ways.

Many farmers were killed and a large number were sent to jail. A Jat farmer was beaten to death in the market of Sikar town; his dead body was thrown and insulted. This movement got support from famous Kisan leaders like, Baldev Ram Mirdha, Nathuram Mirdha and Kumbharam Arya. After a long struggle the farmers got rid of oppression and got the ownership right over the land they were cultivating. The leading Jat farmers of Shekhawati region, who played important role in the movement for abolition of the Jagirdari system, were:

- Sardar Har Lal Singh, Mandasi
- Iswar Singh Bhamu Bhairupura,
- Hari Singh Burdak and Hardeva Palthana,
- Prithvi Singh Gothra,
- Ganeshram Kudan,

- Panne Singh Bataranau,
- Goru Singh Katrathal,
- Deva Singh Bochalya,
- Chandrabhan Singh,
- Hardev Singh Nehra Harsawa.

Shekhawati farmers' movement against abolition of Jagirs got great support from outside Kisan leaders like Sir Chhotu Ram from Haryana, Kunwar Ratan Singh and Thakur Deshraj from Bharatpur, Kunwar Hukum Singh from Aangai.

Marwar Farmers' Movement

The farmers of the Marwar region are considered to be the most simple in the state of Rajasthan. The most dominating farmer community in the rural areas of Marwar is Jat. The Jats are politically and economically very sound. The major land holdings in the present times are with Jats.

Though the position of Kis?n (farmer) in what was Kh?ls? (under the direct control of the state) was better in comparison to a Kisan of the Jagir areas, he was only a little above a beast of burden. In Jagir areas of Marwar state before independence all cultivators were really landless.

There was no tenancy Law and one could be thrown away from the land one cultivated at the pleasure of Jagirdar, his "malik". In most of the Jagirs a Jagirdar would in the first instance be taking fifty percent of the produce. This would be taken by actual division of the produce on the thrashing floor or by appraisal of the standing crop (kunt?). The latter method proved at times more onerous as the appraisal depended on the whims of the K?md?r. Then over and above the share of the produce the farmer had to pay numerous "lags" or cesses.

There were 64 kinds of begars (work without pay) prevalent in Marwar. Then the bigger Jagirdars had judicial powers including magisterial powers. Further they had their own police force besides the revenue staff. This enabled them to keep their stronghold on the farmers. Over and above this policy of divide and rule was fully practiced. By offering the temptation of giving better land for cultivation one farmer would be set against another. There

were no schools worth the name in rural areas and the masses were steeped in ignorance.

The oppression of the public by traditional Samantas (chiefs) and Jagirdars (feudatories) of Marwar state made their life difficult, which led to a class war. In urban areas, Jaynarayan Vyas started agitation against oppression, under the banner of "Marwar Lok Parishad" founded on 16th May 1938.

This movement was supported by National Congress. The persons who played important role in "Marwar Lok Parishad" were: Shiv Dayal Dave and Jorawar Singh Oswal of Nagaur, Rajpurohit Manji Jagarwal of (Bagra,Jalore), Kishanlal Sahu, Manak Chand Konari and Sari Mal of Kuchaman City, Tulsiram of Didwana, Srikishan Pandit of Kolia and Sukhdev Dipankar of Ladnu.

Rural masses of Marwar were united by Kisan Kesari-Baldev Ram Mirdha under the banner of "Marwar Kisan Sabha" founded in 1940. After the formation of Rajasthan, Baldev Ram Mirdha who had by then retired from Government service formed the "Rajathan Kisan Sabha" and unified the Kis?ns of Rajasthan under its banner. He was its first president.

Since the broad objectives of the Kis?n Sabh? and the congress were identical the congress leaders approached Baldev Ram Mirdha to unite the Rajasthan Kis?n Sabh? with the Congress. Baldev Ram Mirdha was a visionary and he realized that the two could not and should not remain separate. Therefore, he just made one demand from the national leaders that the Jagirs be abolished forthwith in Rajasthan. This was agreed to by the Congress high command with the result that the Jagirs were soon abolished. A tenancy law was passed and the cultivating farmers were made the owners of the land.

GHARSANA FARMERS' MOVEMENT

The tehsil town of Gharsana and the neighbouring Raola in Sriganganagar district of Rajasthan is currently site of clashes between the police and the farmers agitating for irrigation water. The farmers, and their leaders who led the agitation under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Vyapari Sangarsh Samiti, were either

nursing their injured or in hiding. About 20 injured have been admitted to the Gharsana hospital and the district hospital in Sriganganagar.

The authorities said curfew was clamped in Raola as a precautionary measure as in the previous agitation by the farmers on the same issue in October-November 2004 both Raola and Gharsana had witnessed serious violence.

Earlier in in October 2004, Defying prohibitory orders, hundreds of farmers had gheraoed the SDM's office at Gharsana town in Sriganganagar district, reviving their agitation for irrigation water after the October 27, police firing which claimed five lives.

With a view to appeasing the agitating farmers, the Vasundhara Raje Government ordered the removed of the Divisional Commissioner of the region, Mr Ramavtar Raghuvanshi, and Superintendent of Police, Mr Sunil Dutt, while two officers of the Rajasthan Administrative Service, Mr Indra Singh Rao and Mr Hitesh Kumar, have been placed under suspension. The farmers' agitation led the Government to impose curfew in July 2005 also.

Farmers of Gharsana, at Ganganagar in Rajasthan, are on path of confrontation with the BJP government for the release of water from Pong Dam to the Phase I areas of Indira Gandhi Canal, the lifeline of farmers in the Gharsana-Raola agriculture belt. At a juncture when India is importing wheat from other countries, the state government is dissuading farmers in the region from cultivating wheat during the rabi season. The farmers have been told to sow barley or mustard, rather than wheat, which is a water-intensive crop.

The movement has gained momentum with the Kisan Mazdoor Vyapari Sangharsh Samiti, the committee of farmers, labourers and agro-traders of the region deciding to go ahead with sowing wheat. The strife over water has seen the peasants and the state administration clash often in the past three years. Seven farmers were killed and many were injured when police fired at protesters in 2004.

7

Sardar Patel as Member of Counstitutuent Assembly

Sardar Patel was one of the founders of our Constitution. It was drafted by the Constituent Assembly, which was not elected on the basis of adult franchise. First-rate minds were hand-picked from all parts of India -- for their knowledge, vision and dedication.

Our occasion to ponder over the issue is the book under review "Inside Story of Sardar Patel: The Diary of Maniben Patel: 1936-50"

The story of Sardar Patel's life is easily told. The traditional date of his birth is October 31, 1875. But really speaking, nobody knows the exact day on which he was born. The traditional date is what he gave for his matriculation examination and he never changed it - rather typical of the consistancy which characterised his mental make-up.

He had three great ambitions. First of all, he wanted to consolidate India. In the five thousand years of its history, India was never united: it had always been a group of different states. Vallabhbhai wanted to bring into existence a united, homogeneous India when it became a republic in 1950.

His second ambition was to ensure the survival of a united country through the instrument of a strong civil service. He conceived of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in place of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), and it was he who also conceived of the Indian Police Service (IPS). Both these services are very much active today.

His third ambition was to make India economically strong, prosperous and progressive. This ambition remains to be fulfilled.

Among the women who effectively participated in India's freedom movement, Maniben Patel, Sardar Patel's daughter, was one of the foremost. She devoted her entire life to the service of the country. She remained unmarried and took care of Gandhi's health during the prime of her life. Later, for a number of years she took care of her own father. It is widely believed that but for her devoted care, Sardar Patel would not have continued to live as long as he did, nor achieve what he did in India's service.

Maniben saw to it that people did not tire the Sardar by unduly prolonging their stay. When she felt that discussion on a particular issue wasover, she would caution the visitors that their time was up and that they should leave. If she found that Sardar Patel was at fault in unnecessarily prolonging a discussion, she would hold her watch in front of her father and the Sardar would tell his visitors that he had been shown the watch and warned. She thus prevented him from tiring himself. The nation should be grateful to her for this great service.

Fortunately, Maniben Patel had maintained a diary in which she had recorded what happened during the years she was with her father and took care of his health. She was absolutely honest, keenly observed what happened when people came and met the Sardar, and how the Sardar dealt with the many problems that faced the nation.

Maniben's diary is of inestimable value to scholars, statesmen and laymen alike. It throws light on the innermost thoughts of Sardar Patel which he could not otherwise express even to his closest friends. Maniben was invariably present with the Sardar at all his meetings excepting, of course, the strictly official ones and would later record whatever transpired in those meetings, particularly Sardar's views on highly important issues facing the country, the Congress party and the government.

It would appear that Maniben meticulously maintained a diary from 8 June, 1936, till Sardar expired on December 15, 1950. Maniben would note down Sardar's speeches in Parliament and keep his correspondence handy, besides date-wise notes of visitors

and talks conducted with them. Before going to bed, she would make her notes in her diary. She would wake up before the "Pir" Sardar did and get ready to serve him in her multiple roles as Sardar's daughter, secretary, washerwoman and nurse, all in one. Naturally, no entries were written when the Sardar or Maniben Patel were in prison which was frequent -- during individual satyagraha in 1939 and later on during the Quit India movement in 1942, which kept them both behind bars till 1945.

Maniben has described how she took up the work of secretarial assistance to Sardar Patel at the end of the Bardoli satyagraha in 1928. She writes: "It was suggested that somebody should give him secretarial help…If someone is to be kept, why not I? From 1929 until his death, I preserved his correspondence whenever possible. Once when K.Gopalaswami, political commentator of the Times of India, visited him in his flat on Marine Drive, Bombay, the Sardar called for a letter he had received from C. Rajagopalachari, forgetting that he had torn it up and thrown it in the wastepaper basket. Fortunately, I had collected the pieces. It took me some time to paste them together before passing it on to him. This happened before that Interim Government was formed…

"The Sardar travelled second-class by train before he became a minister. I would spread his bedding at night and retire to a third-class compartment. But from 1934 when there was much correspondence to attend to even on train journeys and people came to see him at the various stations, I kept company with him in his second-class compartment. I used to make copies of important letters he wrote by hand, but he would question this, asking why I was taking such trouble and wasting time. I also kept newspaper clippings of important events with which he was associated.

After 1945, the secretarial functions of the Congress Parliamentary Board were undertaken mainly by Shantilal Shah. The Sardar was undergoing treatment for intestinal trouble at the Nature Cure Clinic, Poona, when he sent for Shantilal Shah from Bombay. Shah, a Congress Socialist, hesitated at first because he did not know what was in store for him. But B.G. Kher, the Premier of Bombay, advised him to take up the work.

The Sardar told Shah he wanted him to act as his secretary at the Parliamentary Board Office located at the headquarters of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee."

Maniben adds: "I used to sleep by the telephone to take calls that came at odd hours of the night so that father's sleep was not disturbed. I took down messages and passed them on to him the next morning. One such call came at midnight from Biswanath Das, them Premier of Orissa. He had decided to resign over the choice of a provincial official to act as Governor. The Sardar backed him and the Viceroy yielded."

Even after the Sardar had taken over as Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, Maniben continued to deal with his Gujarati correspondence, while V. Shankar, Sardar's Private Secretary, attended to English correspondence. This immensely significant source of information, originally written in Gujarati in Maniben's own hand, was never published even in Gujarati, let alone translated into English. This is for the first time that it is being published.

The diary entries of the earlier years are somewhat perfunctory but in the later years, and particularly after the release of Sardar Patel from jail in 1945, they are far move detailed and deal with important and sensitive matters of great import. Sardar expressed his opinions about events and individuals freely and frankly, which were faithfully recorded by his daughter who was like his shadow and accompanied him everywhere.

Her opinion and estimate of many of the leaders and the people Sardar Patel met, which she recorded while her father was still alive, are not only interesting but revealing of the personality of those who met him and of the many problems which they discussed with Sardar and sought his opinion.

Sardar Patel emerges from the diary as a man of action and unbending will, singularly focussed on service to the nation, capable of putting the bigger cause above his own, forthright and blunt, and a man of honour who repeatedly set aside his own ambitions at the request of his mentor. The book also contains a simple, touching estimation of her father by Maniben, as also a comprehensive biographical sketch of Maniben Patel herself.

Maniben Patel's diary both fills in and fleshes out some of India's most epochal years, and those of one of its tallest leaders. As such its importance and value for both the scholar and the inquiring citizen can hardly be exaggerated.

A PROMOTER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

When the Soviet Union denounced Pandit Nehru in 1948 as a puppet whom "American imperialism" was trying to prop up in place of the old "paper tiger", President Chiang Kai-shek of China, the Western nations, particularly the United States of America, had proclaimed immediately that Pandit Nehru was the "bulwark of democracy in Asia". But the Korean War was hardly half through when it was widely realised in the West that at least in the field of international politics Pandit Nehru was no friend of the West, and that his sympathies, whenever and wherever they became manifest, were always and all along with the communist camp. The West has, however, been bewitched by Pandit Nehru on another count. He seems to it to be the "only person who understands the dynamics of the modern world" in a "surging sea of superstition and primitivism that is India". Western statesmen and scribes have floated another myth also about him, namely that whatever the policies he pursues in the sphere of international politics, "at least inside India he is not prepared to tolerate Communism", and that "he is fighting the Communist Party of India tooth and nail". And in support of this new illusion, Western writers have been quoting his record of resistance to communist violence during 1948-50.

But if we examine Pandit Nehru's statements and behaviour all through this period, we find no evidence in support of this belief. In fact, all available evidence goes against any such supposition. We have seen how he was worshipping the Soviet Union and adhering to Soviet foreign policy all through this period. He never reacted against all that foul abuse which was heaped upon him by the Soviet camp without any provocation whatsoever on his part. He had not a word to say in condemnation of the Soviet grab in Eastern Europe and China, or against the Zhdanov line which neatly divided the world into two uncompromisingly hostile camps - the "camp of socialism and peace led by the Soviet

Union", and the "camp of imperialism and war led by the United States of America".

Nearer home, he never saw eye to eye with Sardar Patel who as Home Minister in the Government of India and the strong man of the Congress Party, was the real author of that suppression of communist violence which saved India from becoming a prototype of Burma, Malaya and Indo-China in 1948-50. In fact, he never relished the strength shown by the Sardar during those fateful years. He said repeatedly that the real problem was not Communism but poverty and sociopolitical backwardness of the Indian masses. In his opinion, it was useless to try to suppress the communist movement so long as the economic and social problems of India were not solved. The differences that thus arose between him and Sardar Patel at that time assumed serious proportions and at one stage he almost decided to quit the Congress Party in order to form a platform of his own in collaboration with various leftist and crypto-communist elements and some disgruntled Gandhians. That was the genesis of the Democratic Front organised by Acharya Kripalani and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, both of whom had left the Congress at his behest.

But, fortunately for Pandit Nehru and unfortunately for India, Sardar Patel died in December 1950, and the "Congress Right" which the Sardar had consolidated against Pandit Nehru before and after the election of Purushottama Das Tandon to the presidentship of the Congress, was left leaderless. The other stalwarts of the Sardar's camp turned out to be men of straw whose first preference was saving their personal position and power rather than doing service to their country. The only man, D.P. Mishra of Madhya Pradesh, who came out publicly against Pandit Nehru's swift shift of Congress policies towards Communism, was left in the lurch by this crowd of self-seekers and job-hunters, and hounded out of the Congress. And six months had hardly passed since the Sardar's death when the communist criminals, who had indulged in widespread arson and murder against the innocent peasantry in several parts of India, were brought out of jails like martyrs in the cause of humanism, and given a signal to get ready for the forthcoming First General Elections. Small wonder that they were soon to win unexpected

victories. This instance of Nehru-Communist collaboration in the domestic politics of India was neither the first nor the foremost of its kind. It was only a link in that long chain which was forged immediately after Pandit Nehru's first pilgrimage to the Soviet Union in 1927, and which is now leading the country blindfold into an inevitable Nehru-Communist coalition at the Centre in the next few years to come. Pandit Nehru has always nursed the Communist Party of India with the fondness of an old woman who gave birth to her first and only child at an advanced age. And if India allows him to wield power for a few more years, he will see to it that the Communist Party of India is safely installed in power. The pattern of Congress-Communist collaboration which is to emerge in due course has already been blueprinted by the Vijaywada Congress of the CPI held early this year (1961), and initially experimented with during the recent mid-term elections in Orissa.

Getting back to Pandit Nehru and his age-old collaboration with communism, we find that as soon as he returned from the Soviet Union at the end of 1927 he propounded the thesis that the Indian National Congress was a "party of the Indian bourgeoisie" and as such inevitably "bound to become an instrument of imperialism" if it was not "radicalised" by bringing into it "the revolutionary labour and peasant movements". It was another way of saying that the Communist Party of India, which was at that time the leader of whatever "revolutionary labour and peasantry" had raised their heads in India, should be brought into the Congress organisation. So he started courting the Communist Party which was at that time keeping away from the Congress and trying to build its own independent organisation.

He attended a session of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) held at Jharia in Bihar a few days before the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1928. And he was immediately elected President of the AITUC against a worker candidate put up by the communist group. His own name had been proposed by the noncommunist section of the AITUC. He regretted this "infancy and weakness" of the Trade Union Movement in the following words: "It was my first Trade Union Congress and I was practically an outsider, though my activities amongst the peasantry, and

lately amongst the workers, had gained for me a measure of popularity with the masses. I found the old tussle going on between the reformists and the more advanced and revolutionary elements. The main points at issue were the question of affiliation to one of the internationals, as well as to the League against Imperialism and the Pan-Pacific Union, and the desirability of sending representatives to the International Labour Office Conference at Geneva. More important than these questions was the vast difference in outlook between the two sections of the Congress. There was the old trade union group, moderate in politics and indeed distrusting the intrusion of politics in industrial matters. They believed in industrial action only and that, too, of a cautious character, and aimed at the gradual betterment of worker's conditions... The other group was more militant, believed in political action, and openly proclaimed its revolutionary outlook. It was influenced, though by no means controlled, by some communists and near-communists... My own sympathies at Jharia were with the advanced group but, being a newcomer, I felt a little at sea in these domestic conflicts of the TUC and I decided to keep aloof from them. After I had left Jharia and annual TUC elections took place, I learnt at Calcutta that I had been elected President for the next year. I had been put forward by the moderate group, probably because they felt that I stood the best chance of defeating the other candidate who was an actual worker (on the railways) and who had been put forward by the radical group. If I had been present at Jharia on the day of the election I am sure that I would have withdrawn in favour of the worker candidate. It seemed to me positively indecent that a newcomer and a non-worker should be suddenly thrust into the presidentship. This was in itself a measure of the infancy and weakness of the trade union movement in India".

But the communist group was rather happy at this turn of events. Philip Spratt, who was leader of the CPI at that time, writes: "My recollection is that though the communist group put up a worker, or rather a railway clerk, against him, we were not displeased at his election. We did not regard him as one of us, but we recognised him as one who could be useful. The term was not yet current, or we should have called him a fellow-traveller."

They had reason to be happy. Next year, Pandit Nehru was elected president of the Indian National Congress as well. And he used his position to "radicalise the Congress". He himself writes: "During these final weeks prior to the Lahore Congress I had to attend to important work in another field. The All India Trade Union Congress was meeting at Nagpur and, as president for the year, I had to preside over it. It was very unusual for the same person to preside over both the National Congress and the Trade Union Congress within a few weeks of each other. I had hoped that I might be a link between the two and bring them closer to each other-the National Congress to become more socialistic, more proletarian and organised Labour to join the national struggle.

It was, perhaps, a vain hope, for nationalism can only go far in a socialistic or proletarian direction by ceasing to be nationalism. Yet I felt that, bourgeois as the outlook of the National Congress was, it did represent the only effective revolutionary force in the country. As such, Labour ought to bee it and cooperate with it and influence it, keeping, however, its own identity and ideology distinct and intact. And I hoped that the course of events and the participation in direct action would inevitably drive the Congress to a more radical ideology and to face social and economic issues... The advanced sections of Labour, however, fought shy of the National Congress. They mistrusted its leaders, and considered its ideology bourgeois and reactionary, which indeed it was, from the Labour point of view. The Congress was, as its very name implied, a nationalist organisation. Throughout 1929, Trade Unions in India were agitated over a new issue-the appointment of a Royal Commission on Labour in India, known as the Whitley Commission. The Left Wing was in favour of a boycott of the Commission, the Right Wing in favour of cooperation, and the personal factor came in, as some of the Right Wing leaders were offered membership of the Commission. In this matter, as in many others, my sympathies were with the Left."

His efforts towards "radicalising the Congress" met with considerable success, mainly because the international communist line underwent a change in 1935 after a violent swing to the left in 1931-33. The new line, however, required the Communist Party of India to cooperate with the Congress. So a communist platform

was crystallised inside the Congress. It was named Congress Socialist Party. Pandit Nehru was its leader for all practical purposes. He, however, never lent his name officially to this old model of the new Ginger Group. That was profitable for him as well as the Party because he could pass before the country as a non-factious leader, while all his power and prestige thus acquired came to the succour of the pro-Soviet forces. It was at the climax of this conspiracy that he paid his second visit to Europe in order to renew his direct contacts with international Communism. And when he came back to become President of the Indian National Congress for the second time in 1936, he made a definite bid to push the Congress in a communist direction.

Dr. Sitaramayya writes: "Jawaharlal came to India full of communistic and marxian ideas. The achievements of the Congress disappointed him. He found himself as one against the world. The resolution oh the agrarian programme was an apology for an ambitious scheme of social upheaval which he had been ardently hoping to commit the nation to. He made the best of the situation by taking three ardent socialists into the Working Committee-Shri Jayaprakash Narain, Narendra Deo and Achyut Patwardhan; even Sarojini Devi was cut out from the Committee not without some internal commotion and had to be called back only in the middle of the year when a casual vacancy arose. The spirit that prevailed in the Lucknow session could be judged from the omission of any resolution on the Constructive Programme. It may be remembered that it was only lately, that is, in Bombay (1934 October) that the resolution on A.I.V.I.A. (All India Village Industries' Association) was passed and one should have expected some reference to it somewhere. No, not that no one thought about the matter, but that when a draft was prepared and placed before the Working Committee, it did not find favour with it and it was dropped at the Allahabad meeting of the Working Committee shortly before the Lucknow Session."

Again: "There was, however, a fundamental difficulty in the progress of events. The President was out of tune with the majority of the Working Committee.... On the one hand, there was his presidential address which was not meant to be a mere thesis but a programme of action. On the other, there was Gandhi with his

following of ten members in the Working Committee thinking and acting as a solid block... The address pleaded for pure communism in a country which had had its mm traditions built up through at least a hundred and thirty centuries of progress, and a social structure which had, through these long ages, withstood the buffets of time and circumstances and which had worked itself into the life of the nation-religious, economic and ethical."

But the majority of the Congress leadership was opposed to these foreign ideas. Pandit Nehru says: "For a short while I seemed to carry the Congress in the direction I wanted it to go. But I realised soon that the conflict was deep-rooted and it was not so easy to charm away the suspicion of each other and the bitterness that had grown in our ranks. I thought seriously of resigning from the presidentship but, realising that this would only make matters worse, I refrained... Again and again, during the next few months, I considered this question of resignation.

I found it difficult to work smoothly with my own colleagues in the Congress executive, and it became clear to me that they viewed my activities with apprehension. It was not so much that they objected to any specific act but they disliked the general trend and direction. They had justification for this as my outlook was different. I was completely loyal to Congress decisions but I emphasised certain aspects of them, while my colleagues emphasised other aspects. I decided finally to resign and I informed Gandhiji of my decision."

He has always been in the habit of threatening to resign. So far he has never resigned from any position of privilege and power, even if he feels baulked and ideologically circumvented. Like every true communist, he sticks to power and waits for his opportunity. As ever, in 1936 also he found an excuse for withdrawing his resignation. He writes: "Soon afterwards a far-away occurrence, unconnected with India, affected me greatly and made me change my decision. This was the news of General Franco's revolt in Spain. I saw this rising, with its background of German and Italian assistance, developing into a European or even a world conflict. India was bound to be drawn into that and I could not afford to weaken our organisation and create an

internal crisis by resigning just when it was essential for us to pull together." What an excuse for staying in power!

Not only that. He readily agreed to become President of the Congress at the next session held in December 1937 at Faizpur. A majority of the Congressmen wanted Sardar Patel to preside over this session. But the Sardar had to withdraw under orders from Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru got in without a contest. And once again he played the communist game in the foreign policy resolutions of the Congress. The communists he had planted in the Foreign Department of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) were ready by now to supply the necessary drafts paraphrased from Comintern resolutions.

The year 1937 proved to be an year of torment for Pandit Nehru. The Congress had accepted office in several Provinces. But his communist friends in India and abroad wanted the Congress to fight the British Government in India so that the British Government in England may be pressed into forming a "Popular Front Government" on the French pattern. The Communist Party of India was leading labour, strikes and peasant agitations, particularly in Bombay and U.P. He was in sympathy with these communist moves, and felt angry with the Congress Ministries which were trying to keep law and order in the face of increasing communist violence. He writes: "This dissatisfaction found expression in the Congress itself and the more advanced elements grew restive. I was myself unhappy at the trend of events as I noticed that our fine fighting organisation was being converted gradually into just an electioneering organisation. A struggle for independence seemed to be inevitable and this phase of provincial autonomy was just a passing one. In April 1938 I wrote to Gandhiji expressing my dissatisfaction at the work of the Congress Ministries. "They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians'."

Again: "So conflict grew within the Congress between the more moderate and the more advanced sections. The first organised expression of this took place in a meeting of the All India Congress

Committee in October 1937. This distressed Gandhiji greatly and he expressed himself strongly in private. Subsequently he wrote an article in which he disapproved of some action I had taken as President....... I felt that I could not longer carry on as a responsible member of the executive but I decided not to do anything to precipitate a crisis. My term of office as Congress President was drawing to an end and I could drop out quietly then. I had been President for two successive years and three times in all. There was some talk of my being elected for another term but I was quite dear in my own mind that I should not stand."

The first time he ever resigned from a position in the Congress was when, in spite of his public protests, Subhas Chandra Bose decided to contest presidential election, and defeated his close companion, Maulana Azad. He now feared that the Congress was in danger of becoming a "fascist organisation". He resigned from the Working Committee and issued a public statement on February 22, 1938: "In spite of my long association with the Congress I have never been closely associated with any particular group in it, though I have had the privilege of cooperating with all kinds of people. I have been an individual in this great organisation and that is always a difficult task. Often I have felt that I was a square peg in a round hole. During the years of my office I have frequently been on the verge of resigning because I felt that I could serve the Congress better if I did not have the responsibility of office.

But I refrained from doing so, as I was firmly convinced that in the dynamic and critical times we live in we must present a united front and subordinate our individual opinions where these tended to impair that front. I have been and am a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy, and have at the same time accepted wholeheartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can only come to us from the masses, but that strength either for struggle or for the great work of building a new world must be a disciplined and orderly strength. It is not out of chaos or the encouragement of chaotic forces that we can fashion the India of our dreams. It is true that sometimes even chaos has given birth to a dancing star, but its usual progeny are suffering and degradation and internecine

conflict and reaction." He was talking as if his continuous hobnobbing with the paid agents of a foreign power was unknown to his colleagues and regarded by them as a perfect path towards order and peace.

But the Bose episode next year helped him to get sobered considerably in relation to Mahatma Gandhi of whom he had been becoming increasingly critical because he had come to believe that the Mahatma stood solidly in the way of the communists capturing complete power inside the Congress. Now he knew that but for the Mahatma's "magnetic personality" the Congress had almost been captured by a "band of fascists". So, sometime in the month of March 1939, he confessed: "In trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, the dominating position of Gandhiji must always be remembered. He dominates to some extent the Congress, but far more so he dominates the masses. He does not easily fall in any group and is much bigger than the so-called Gandhian group. That is one of the basic factors of the situation. The conscious and thinking Leftists in the country recognise it and, whatever their ideological or temperamental differences with him, have tried to avoid anything approaching a split. Their attempt bas been to leave the Congress under its present leadership, which means under Gandhiji's guidance, and at the same time to push it as far as they could more to the left to radicalise it, and to spread own ideology."

The shelter that he thus took under the Mahatma's mantle lasted till the Mahatma was murdered in 1948. There was during this period no major crisis inside the Congress organisation which was all along keyed up towards developments in the international situation.

The brief isolation which he suffered in 1942 was ended by the turn-out of the Second World War. He, of course, did not relish the expulsion of the Communist Party of India from the national organisation in 1945 for its traitorous role during 1942-45. But he was helpless because on this question even his followers in the Congress Socialist Party were united with Sardar Patel's "rightist faction". Nor did he relish, as we have already pointed out, Sardar Patel's suppression of the communist insurrection during 1948-50. This time he almost jeopardised his own position as leader of

the Congress Party and the Prime Minister of India. The situation was saved for him only by Sardar Patel's death.

Now he had an unbridled opportunity to patronise the Communist Party of India. We need not go into the details of his policies and pronouncements between 1951 and 1961. The statistics of Communist Party membership speak for themselves. The Party had only 9,000 members when it was legalised for the first time in 1942. The membership had risen to about 89,000 when the Party tried to create a "proletarian revolution" in 1948-50. But as a result of Sardar Patel's statesmanship the Party strength was reduced to 20,000 by the beginning of 1951. Since then the Party membership has been registering a rapid progress, rising to 75,000 in 1954, 125,000 in 1956, and 250,000 in 1958 when the Party decided to become a mass party. Today, the Party membership should be more than 300,000 in spite of the shock of destalinisation, Hungary, Tibet and Red China's encroachments in India, which episodes should have sharply reduced the strength of the Party had India been inspired by a healthy sense of human values and nurtured the natural vigour of home-grown nationalism. The Party which does not believe in parliamentary democracy and which is pledged to destroy democratic institutions as and when it has the power to do, has been permitted to wield governmental power in Kerala. The precedent has encouraged Ajoy Ghose to declare that the Party looked forward to a coalition at the Centre after winning power in a few more States.

Pandit Nehru's patronage has led the Communist Party of India to plead for a "National Democratic Front for National Democratic Tasks" in its recent Party Congress at Vijaywada. The Party now advocates "that in order to defend India's foreign policy, the public sector and the parliamentary system, in order to wage an effective battle against communalism, it is necessary that we forge links with Congressmen". The Political Resolution of the Party says: "Such a policy can alter the correlation of forces in our country in favour of democratic forces and lead to a situation when it will become a practical policy to raise the slogan of a Government of the National Democratic Front... Conditions for such an advance are more favourable today than ever before." Some Congressmen of long standing like B. Shiva Rao have already

warned the country that after the Third General Elections we may have a Government which shall be Congress in name but Communist in content.

Soviet Russia is, in fact, urging upon Pandit Nehru to set up a. real "anti-imperialist Government" in India if he wants a settlement with Red China which will vacate the territories she has occupied as soon as she is assured that India is no more in danger of becoming "a base of American imperialism". He cannot stand this pressure which is coupled with a threat to unleash a civil war in India with the help of the CPI whom the Soviet Slave Empire can now directly aid and arm across our northern borders that have been ripped open. Had Pandit Nehru been a patriot and a man of courage, he would have taken the country into confidence and tried to wipe out the Communist Party of India in a bid to meet the Chinese threat militarily. But being a communist and a coward, he will readily succumb to Sino-Soviet machinations and hand over his country to Soviet imperialism, as his prototype and predecessor, Benes of Czechoslovakia, did in February 1948.

In the next and the last article of this series, we shall discuss why this country and the Western world at large continue to believe that Pandit Nehru is an anti-communist in whose hands India's independence and democracy are safe. It is as big and dangerous a delusion as the one about Mao Tse-tung who was publicised and patronised by the Americans as an "agrarian reformer" till he kicked them in the pants, and took his country on the road to cannibalism.

Postscript (1993)

The Communist Party of India (CPI) passed a resolution in June 1947, asking all "progressive" Congressmen to rally round Pandit Nehru. On June 21, 1947, Pandit Nehru wrote to P. Subbarayan, Premier of Madras, asking the latter to "consider if you cannot tone down your policy in regard to keeping a considerable number of communists under detention". He thought that "the Communist Party is trying to change its policy towards the Congress and the Congress Governments", and that "a gesture on your part might be a good policy". He did not care that the CPI was carrying on, at that very time, a virulent campaign against

the "reactionary" Congressmen led by Sardar Patel, a stalwart of the Congress Party and Home Minister in the Government headed by him. All that he cared was that the CPI had become soft towards "progressives" like him. Significantly, he did not write similar letters to Home Ministers in the rest of the Provinces ruled by the Congress Party at that time. The reason was simple. These other Congress Governments were dominated by what the CPI regarded as "reactionary" Congressmen. P. Subbarayan, it seems, was the only "progressive" Premier. He was the father of Mohan Kumaramangalam and Parvati Krishnan, the famous communist leaders from the South, and apparently in sympathy with them.

Pandit Nehru was, however, disillusioned very soon. The CPI changed its line in the next few months. P.C. Joshi, the General Secretary of the CPI, was replaced by B.T. Ranadive who placed the Congress Government led by Pandit Nehru squarely in the camp of "Anglo-American imperialists and warmongers" in January 1948. He now shared his woes with his sister, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who was India's Ambassador in Moscow at that time. He wrote to her in a letter dated January 23, 1948 that "the Communist Party of India has recently changed its policy again and is now against the Government which is dubbed as just a camp-follower of Anglo-Americans". And he believed that "many people in Russia may form their opinions from reports of the Communist Party of India". He was, however, to admit the truth a few months later, namely that it was not the CPI which was misleading Moscow, but Moscow which was directing the CPI to become hostile to the Congress Party and India's new government.

All the same, he was dead against any action being taken against the CPI, which several Provincial Governments were forced to do in view of increasing communist violence. In a Circular Letter dated March 17, 1948, he wrote to the Premiers of all Provinces regretting that "the West Bengal Government had banned the Communist Party" without reference to Government of India, and informing them that Government of India had "no intention of banning the Communist Party or indeed of large-scale arrests". He forgot that law and order was a Provincial subject, and Provincial Governments were the best judges of how to meet situations created by criminals. At the same time, he tried to see

that there was no "misunderstanding in Moscow". He cabled to Mrs. Pandit on March 31, 1948, conveying that the Government of West Bengal had acted without consulting the Government of India, and that "it is not our intention to ban Communist Party in other parts of India".

The Government of East Punjab had been forced to arrest large number a communists in order to forestall violence by them. Pandit Nehru felt annoyed. In a letter dated May 3, 1948, he asked Dr. Gopichand Bhargava, the Premier of East Punjab, why "the number of arrests in the Punjab had been by far the greatest" when "in most provinces only a few persons have been arrested". He protested that "our actions in this respect had repercussions all over the world and... our reputation has suffered". He also informed Bhargava that "our ambassadors have received deputations and I have received numerous messages from other parts of the world". On the same day he wrote a similar letter to C.M. Trivedi, Governor of East Punjab.

Incidentally, he used these letters to the Premier and the Governor of East Punjab to chide them for allowing the RSS people to "function again in public under different disguises" and "to spread their poisonous propaganda". The fact that the RSS had been placed under an all-India ban for a single crime committed by an individual who was not even a member of the RSS, did not bother him. Nor did the fact that the RSS was protesting peacefully against the ban, carry any weight with him. He did not notice at all that the communists were functioning from many fronts, all of them wedded to violence. The only thing that mattered to him was that, unlike the communists, the RSS people had no paymasters abroad, and no foreigners were protesting against what was being done to them.

There had been large-scale witch-hunting against the RSS all over the country, particularly in Maharashtra where some Brahmanas had been killed, many others molested, and their houses and establishments burnt down. Pandit Nehru did not even notice the persecution, not to speak of protesting against it. But he at once imagined a great persecution when communist violence was denounced in some places. In a letter dated May 29, 1948 to Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier of UP, he saw "all

manner of reactionary elements taking refuge in the cry of 'down with communism'..." That leaves little doubt that, for him, the people who committed violence against innocent Brahmanas in Maharashtra were "progressive elements".

One of the leading communists arrested in Bihar was Habib Mahmud, son of Pandit Nehru's close friend, Syed Mahmud. In fact, most of his close friends in the Congress and elsewhere had sons or daughters or other relatives who were members of the CPI or its fronts. He was flooded with protests from these friends or their families. Habib Mahmud had another plus point in his favour. Besides being a communist, he was a Muslim as well. He wrote a letter to Pandit Nehru who forwarded it to Sri Krishna Sinha, the Premier of Bihar, with a covering note dated June 8, 1948 stating that he was "surprised at the kind of charges that are being brought in justification of this internment". He, thought that the "charges are entirely vague" and protested that "we have been very much criticized in foreign countries on this subject".

By now he was finding it impossible to ignore the truth about CPI's source of inspiration. In a letter dated June 26, 1948, he complained to Krishna Menon, Moscow's man stationed as India's High Commissioner in London at that time, that (i) "The Russian attitude to India has become one of condemnation and running down the Government of India", (ii) "Articles in some Russian periodicals contain bitter criticism and we are continually referred to as some kind of stooges of the Anglo-American bloc", and (iii) "the Communist Party of India, which presumably will never go against the main trend of Russian foreign policy, has been adopting not only a hostile attitude but a rebellious attitude". He was hoping that Krishna Menon might be able to soften Moscow. So he took no one else in confidence, nor stated the truth about the CPI publicly at that time or ever. The people of India did not deserve his confidence, nor did they need the correct information. And he continued to be grieved over the steps which Sardar Patel and the Provincial Governments had taken in order to counter communist violence and subversion.

In September 1948, he had gone to London in order to attend a Commonwealth Conference. On his return, he wrote a letter dated October 10, 1948 to Sardar Patel, stating that "we are criticized

considerably for our detention without trial and other repressive activities of the state, in so far as trade unions and labour people and the like are concerned", that "even Lady Mountbatten told me that she was worried about it", and that "Members of Parliament also spoke about it". Not many people in India knew at that time, or know even now, that Edwina Mountbatten was a whore who had slept with every communist intellectual within her reach, including Pandit Nehru. Nor did Pandit Nehru name the Members of Parliament who had protested to him. They were only a few and famous fellow-travellers. And he presented the communist criminals as trade unionists and labour leaders. He was setting the precedent which latter-day champions of human rights would follow in the face of terrorism in the Punjab and Kashmir. For the likes of Pandit Nehru, victims of violence have no rights.

Incidentally again, in the same letter he conveyed to Sardar Patel that "Regarding RSS, there is a widespread impression in England that they are Fascist, communal-minded people", and that "If at this juncture we remove the ban on the RSS... this will be widely interpreted -as encouraging certain Fascist elements in India". Poor RSS being a patriotic organization had no patrons abroad, and opinion within the country or even inside the Congress Party had no meaning for Pandit Nehru.

Edwina Mountbatten had also spoken to him, while he was in London, "about a proposal to hold a Conference in Calcutta under the auspices of the Women's International Democratic Federation". He referred the matter to the Home Ministry which sent to him a detailed note prepared by H.V.R. Iengar, Secretary of the Ministry, about the character of this Federation and the consequence bound to follow from its conference in Calcutta. Pandit Nehru felt helpless, and forwarded the Home Ministry's note with a long letter he wrote to the "Lady" on November 11, 1948. He reminded her of his past services to the cause of Communism and apologised for his failure in the present instance. He said:

"In this note a reference is made to the South East Asia Students' Conference that was held in Calcutta early this year... I remember that the Conference was objected, at the time, but I was against prohibiting it... It was largely due to me that the Conference was

held and any delegates coming to it from abroad were supplied with visas... It is now a recognized fact by all well-informed persons that this Conference immediately led to what happened soon after in Burma, Malaya, India and to some extent in Siam.

"A delegation from the Women's International Democratic Federation visited India sometime back... The delegation produced subsequently a report which was a very bad one from our point of view... I might mention that that delegation also came here because I interested myself in having visas issued to them.

"You know that I have had strong leanings towards Communism and have many friends among Communists."

In December 1948, the Home Ministry had deputed one of its intelligence officers, Sanjeevi, to visit Britain and some other countries in Europe in order to survey the state of India's intelligence organisation abroad, and suggest steps for its improvement. His visit had been cleared by Pandit Nehru to whom the matter had been referred by the Home Ministry. But Krishna Menon reacted violently to Sanjeevi's visit to London and said that the officer had been sent by Sardar Patel to spy on him. In his talks to Sanjeevi, he "condemned the policy of the Government of India, and particularly of the Home Ministry regarding the Communists in India which he termed as 'barbarous and inhuman'..., refused to believe that the Communists of India were resorting to violence, and justified the criticism in the British Press of the Government of India's action against the Communists".

The incident created a furore in the Home Ministry when, on his return to India, Sanjeevi reported verbally to Sardar Patel the substance of what Krishna Menon had said. The Sardar advised him to talk to Pandit Nehru who suggested to him to submit a written report. At the same time, Pandit Nehru wrote a letter dated January 5, 1949 to Krishna Menon, warning him that Sardar Patel was upset, and asking him to tell "what exactly happened". A written report dated January 6, 1949 was submitted by Sanjeevi to the Home Ministry. On the same day, Sardar Patel forwarded the report to Pandit Nehru stating that he was "very distressed about it and deeply pained to rind Krishna Menon adopting the attitude and views which he expressed in his interview with Sanjeevi".

Pandit Nehru wrote back to Sardar Patel expressing amazement "how and why Krishna Menon should have talked in this way". He offered a defence of his minion. "I can only explain," he said, "and excuse it to some extent by imagining that he was under some deep mental strain and consequently completely upset. He is often rather ill and sometimes his nerves give way when he is unwell."

By all normal rules of policy and administration, Krishna Menon should have been sacked immediately. He was not only hostile to the Government of India which he was supposed to represent, but also a sick man, physically as well as mentally. But the problem was that Pandit Nehru was extremely fond of his spokesman in London, and shared the views the latter had expressed. In fact, he needed Krishna Menon for planting in the British press stories which could be relayed back to India.

C. Rajagopalachari who was in New Delhi during those days, waiting for a ministerial job, had also been taken into confidence by Sardar Patel. He wrote to Pandit Nehru on January 11, 1949, advising the latter that Krishna Menon should "write a letter acknowledging his error and expressing regret for his remarks about Vallabhbhai Patel to Sanjeevi". Pandit replied to him on the same day stating that Krishna Menon "is an extraordinary nervous individual, and sometimes gets completely upset by rather trivial happenings." At the same time, he proclaimed that Krishna Menon's "work at the India has been first-rate", and that he "is greatly popular and his staff works harder under him than it had previously done".

But Pandit Nehru was really perturbed. He wrote to Krishna Menon on January 11, 1949, doubting whether Sanjeevi's report "is strictly accurate or not", showing understanding for Krishna Menon's "feelings about certain matters in India", and admonishing him that he should have expressed to a mere officer his opinion about policies which had been laid down by the Home Ministry." Krishna Menon replied on January 16, 1948, and "accused Sanjeevi of reporting a conversation which Menon had assumed to be unofficial, charged him with 'drawing him out' under false pretences, and of being an 'agent provocateur'." He did not deny that he said all that he was reported to have said to Sanjeevi. But

in a subsequent letter dated January 20, 1949, he authorised Pandit Nehru "to deal with this matter and its implications in anyway you wish".

Pandit Nehru was busy at that lime with the Conference on Indonesia as he informed Krishna Menon by a letter dated January 24, 1949. But he found time on January 26, 1949 to write a long letter to Krishna Menon after consultations with Rajagopalachari. He explained to Krishna Menon at length why Sanjeevi had been sent out, assured him that Sardar Patel appreciated his work, and enclosed the draft of a letter to be sent by him to Sardar Patel. The draft shows the level to which Pandit Nehru could sink for protecting his protege. He advised Krishna Menon to say that i) "I have not seen the report and I have no notes of the conversation"; ii) "I do not think I said anything of this kind"; iii) "what I told him was about reactions in England about Indian affairs"; iv) "It is possible that Mr. Sanjeevi did not quite follow what I was talking about"; and v) "I should like to express my deep regret to you for any annoyance caused to you". One wonders whether Krishna Menon relished the words put into his mouth. He was a self-righteous man who seldom felt or expressed regret for his words, while he went about abusing and insulting people who could not hit back.

Pandit Nehru admitted in his Circular Letter dated April 16, 1949 addressed to the Premiers that "No one is in doubt about the highly injurious activities of the Communist Party of India". But he advised them that "the Cabinet was of the opinion that any step in the nature of banning the Communist Party of India should be avoided at present". For, "if we ban the Party the aspect of sabotage and terrorism, will rather fade out from people's mind and it will be thought that the banning was due to ideological reason". Whatever the facts, his conclusions were always the same. He was always out to protect the CPI.

Next day, he wrote to B.G. Kher, the Premier of Bombay: "I have received telegrams from well-known writers informing that Bombay Government has seized their passports and prevented their departure for Paris to attend some Peace Conference. I have also received protests from Professor Joliot Curie, an eminent scientist of Paris. Could you kindly look into the matter as

prominent men are involved." He did not mention the fact that the "well-known writers" and the "eminent scientist" were famous communists and fellow-travellers.

He made his own position pretty clear in a Press Conference held in New Delhi on August 8, 1949. He was asked if he would "seek the cooperation of the RSS for fighting what is generally known as the communist menace". He said that "we frankly do not trust the RSS very much and we shall keep a very vigilant outlook in regard to it". He did not say in so many words that he regarded the RSS as fascist, but that was what he meant, as was obvious from his reply to the next question. He was asked, "You made a statement some time in 1932 or 1934 that as between fascism and Communism your heed was for the latter. What is your view now?" Pat came the reply, "Still the same."

Around the same time Edwina Mountbatten had written to him protesting "why leaders of communal parties should be released, when others are not". She was annoyed at the release of some RSS leaders with whom the Government of India wanted to have talks. Of course, by "others" she meant the communists. He wrote back to her on September 19, 1949 that it was difficult to detain people who disavowed violence, though "their presence is certainly an incitement to trouble". That was about the RSS. Coming to the communists, he pleaded helplessness because "they go on advocating something in the nature of violent rebellion and sabotage and indulge in it, whenever opportunity offers". He admitted that communist activity was "in the nature of a war". But at the same time, he conveyed to the "Lady" that "many people take advantage of the Communist cloak to carry out acts of private vengeance", and thus attributed to common criminals rather than the communists the "large number of murders" that the latter had committed.

Finally, in a Circular Letter dated October 2, 1949 addressed to the Premiers, he informed them that the Government of Madras had banned the Communist Party of India with the approval of the Government of India, and that the public had welcomed the step. But at the same time, he warned them that this banning "has nothing to with ideology or theory" of Communism. And he blamed the widespread communist violence in Hyderabad on

"the very backward land tenure system". Thus it is a myth that Pandit Nehru approved of the steps which Sardar Patel and the Provincial Governments led by the latter took against the communist insurrection in 1948-49. It is quite another matter that he could not save the situation for the communists in spite of his best efforts.

Years ago I saw Chetan Mehta's movie Sardar. The Iron Man left a deep impression on me. I was fortunate to read this book, Patel - A Life by Rajmohan Gandhi. The essay is based on this book. Quoting Rajmohan "There exists a general view that Gandhi was unfair to Patel is what prompted me to write this book. If a wrong had been perpetuated, some correction from one of Gandhi's grandsons would be in order". Wrote in 1959, our first President Rajendera Prasad, "That there is today an India to think and talk about, is very largely due to SP's statesmanship and determination. Yet, we are apt to ignore him". Imperfections had he but is anyone of us perfect.

I am sharing those parts of his life that saw him evolve, throw light on his personality and approach to problems. In order to provide you with reference and continuity, the essay refers to important events during that period. I have compressed a 540-page book into a forty three-page essay so it is not possible to cover every event and all issues in detail. My choice of content was decided by the importance of an event, reflect Sardar's thoughts. I have tried my best to handle a complex subject. In case of any errors, am willing to stand corrected and seek your forgiveness. The essay is divided into Eight chapters.

1. Early Life (1875 to 1917) covers Patel's family traits, education and initiation into the freedom movement.
2. Lieutenant (1918 to 1922) covers fight of Kheda and the Khilafat Movement.
3. Sardar (1922 to 1929) covers the battle of Bardoli.
4. Boss (1934 to 1939) covers SP's relations with Gandhi and Nehru, elections of 1937, India and the Second World War, SP and Muslims.
5. Thwarted (1939 to 1945) covers relations between Gandhi and SP, Civil Disobedience Movement, Why did Gandhi

prefer Nehru to SP, Cripps Mission in 1942, Quit India Movement, Gandhi's wooing of Jinnah.

6. Victory (1945 to 1947) covers elections of 1945, Cripps Cabinet Mission, Why did Gandhi select Nehru as Congress President to be Premier, Direct Action Plan of 1946, Constituent Assembly, SP and Gandhi, Gandhi's last bid to avoid partition, Partition accepted and Princely states.
7. Climax (1947-1948) covers riots in Delhi and Calcutta, Jungarh Won, Kashmir, Hyderabad, payment of Rs 55 crs to Pakistan and Hyderabad Won.
8. Soldier (1948 to 1950) covers critics of SP, election of Dr R Prasad as President of India, SP's views of Tibet and China, developments in Kashmir, election of Purshottam Tandon as Congress President and a tribute to the Iron Man.

1875 TO 1917

Halfway between Ahmedabad and Baroda is the town of Nadiad. Here was born Patel (P) on a day that people believe was October 31, 1875. He belonged to a family of land owners, Patidars, modern day Patels. Their ancestors - possibly linked to the Huns who swept down from the northwest from the 6th century or to the Gurjars of Punjab or both. Some of their characteristics were loyalty to Hinduism, rallying against outsiders, male supremacy, and silence before elders. Bluntness in speech, an unconcern about dress and appearance, a sense of superiority towards non-Patidars and self-image of tough men meant they were naturally born to rule over others. Patel did his law and became Pleader, Borsad. Like many others at that time he too wanted to go to England. He saved Rs 10,000 and was all set to go until elder brother Vithalbhai expressed a desire to go. P gave his brother 15 days to make up his mind failing which P would go. This characteristic of keeping second string to his bow is, as we shall see later, became part of his character. This happened in 1901. He lost his wife Jhaverba in 1909. For the benefit of his children he did not marry again.

Patel sailed for Engalnd in 1910. From Marseilles, he took a train to Calais and via Dover reached London. He wore western clothes for the first time as he left for London. P resented British rule and the notion of Englishman's superiority. The fire seen in his breadth, when he attacked Englishmen who were calling others uncivilized, was smoldering inside him even in 1910-1913.

He was admitted to the Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court, as London's law colleges were called. In 1910, Nehru was admitted to the Inner temple. While Nehru came via Harrow and Cambridge, P came via Petland, Nadiad and Borsad. P wrote his finals after a 20-month stay, passed in the first attempt and claimed a pound 50 prize. P was called to the Bar, a great honor. He returned to India in 1913. He decided to practice in Ahmedabad inspite of a good offer in Mumbai.

During the next four years i.e. 1913 to 1916 he aroused envy, awe and became the highest paid lawyer in Ahemdabad. Patel with his masculinity impressed the Raj's custodians from 1913 to 1947. The Raj would have knighted him but Destiny! April 1915 brought Gandhi (G) to town. Curiosity took members of the Gujarat Club to the ashram in Kochrab that G had started there. They were told of G's faith in Satyagraha, non-violence. P laughed and made others laugh with his ridicule of the crank and sarcasm about G's brilliant ideas. However, what impressed P about G was his ability to gather a group of young, outstanding lawyers around him. A friend had also taunted P that public could not be served from the Club.

In October 1916, the Gujarat Sabha organized the Bombay Presidency Political Conference in Ahmedabad that saw the extremists led by Tilak sharing a platform with the moderates for the first time. Jinnah, at that time, a keen advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity was asked to preside. P attended and was impressed enough to visit Lucknow where the Congress was to hold its annual session. Unimpressed he returned to practice. However, things changed soon. Offended by the appointment of John Shillidy as Municipal Commissioner of Ahmedabad, P's friends urged him to enter the city board. Having won the election, he was by December 1917, a member of the city board and chairman of the sanitary committee.

Gandhi's firm yet dignified rebuff to the Raj against the exploitation of the indigo workers of Bihar by their British masters

had made the Gujarat Club decide that they wanted G as their President. P concurred. Thus, in April 1917 was forged the first link in the chain that would bind P to G. The incident probably convinced P that Shillidy could be got rid of. Not a guy who shooted from the hip, P gathered irrefutable evidence to prove Shillidy of deliberate insubordination, forcing the Raj to transfer him.

After accepting the presidentship of the Gujarat Sabha G proposed that signatures be collected for a memorandum for Montagu demanding Swaraj. By the end of Sept 8,000 signatures were collected. As P were to say later " I felt that G's ten lines had greater influence than a 100 page memorandum". Working with a G initiated activity for the first time, he went to Borsad and called for signatures.

In November 1917, the Sabha had organized the Gujarat Political Conference where G urged leaders to speak in an Indian language. While Tilak spoke in Marathi, Vithalbhai had to struggle with Gujarati and Jinnah too stammered out a speech in Gujarati. 27 yrs later G said "Jinnah hated me since the day I asked him in a meeting to give up English and speak Gujarati". Impressed with G, P agreed to serve as the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha's first executive committee. G's success in 1917 impressed P. Not to be left behind, P helped majorly when Plague struck Ahembadad and famine the nearby villages.

The farmers of Kheda district were going through trying times. Little rain in 1915, slightly better in 1916, too much rain in 1917. However, its peasants had to pay new higher rates to laborers, the First World War had increased prices, the district was hit by plague too. For these reasons they begged the Raj to lower the land revenue demand. G advised the Gujarat Sabha to ask the peasants to suspend payment until a reply was received to their letter from the Raj Office in Mumbai.

During the Sabha's executive committee meeting, he laid down a condition that atleast one of its members should devote all his time till the Kheda campaign was completed. Obviously he was hinting at Patel. Wooing P was G's objective. P went through self-conflict, was he give up his practice. Quoting G on P's duvidha " My practice may or may not be there tomorrow. Let me leave

them a higher legacy than money". In his book India Wins Freedom, Maulana Azad says that P owed everything to G, P planned his wooing of G. This is untrue. It was G who needed P and not vice versa. It was courage to side with the peasants of Kheda rather than cleverness that made P join G.

1918 to 1922

Ahmedabad Commissioner F Pratt had against the wishes of P appointed an engineer Macassey. Faced with a serious water problem, the Gujarat Sabha had urged action. Said Mr Pratt "The best way Mr Patel, is for your committee to cooperate with the municipal engineer". Unable to control himself P said "The best way is to relieve Macassey. Is there anything he has asked that my committee has not done? Yet when the secretary of the Gujarat Sabha waited on you, you asked him to burn down our houses. Why our houses? Why not burn the bungalow of this fellow who is the root of the trouble? We can see the ruthlessness of P's speech. Unable to deny the charge, Maccasey resigned.

Coming back to the peasants of Kheda, the Government of Bombay ruled out suspension of revenue, period. Preparing for a battle ahead, G and P left for an inspection of Kheda's villages to get first hand information. Pratt had used threats of seizure to collect the first installment of revenue, G urged Pratt to defer the collection of the second but orders for collection had been issued. Realizing that the peasants case was genuine an agitation was launched. 200 peasants signed a pledge on March 22 not pay to revenue to the Raj. P was to later, address a big meeting of Kheda' s peasants at Nadiad, the place of his birth and early childhood. Gone was the suited booted P, in place were Indian clothes. He said -

" This fight will act as a spark which will set the whole country afire. Happiness cannot be obtained without undergoing trials and tribulations, and if perchance you get happiness easily, it does not last very long. In India there is a district called Kheda which is the land of brave men. They will not receive assistance in this manner (i.e. help from the people of Mumbai or Gujarat)".

Pratt responded by seizing the land of some nonpaying peasants of Vadtal. On Pratt's request, G allowed him to address

a gathering of 2,000 peasants in Nadiad. Pratt told the peasants that the Raj was well within its rights to demand land revenue, their lands would be confiscated if they did not pay, there was no way Lord Willingdon would agree to a waiver of land revenue, the final decision was in their hands. Well not only did Pratt not carry out his threat but on April 24 he ordered cancellation of fines and notices of confiscation of land. Only movables would be seized for recovery of revenue and those who could not pay would not be forced to do so. The orders were however, not made public. Apparently, Viceroy Lord Chelmsford forced Pratt to backtrack. The Viceroy needed G's support in the War effort and did not want to alienate him. Kheda's peasants celebrated victory on June 29. Said G on that occasion "If it were not P's assistance, this campaign could not have been carried out so successfully"

Khilafat Movement

The Indian Muslims hated the empire's treatment of Turkey, then the world's largest Islamic state. Not only was Turkey defeated but it transpired in August 1919 that Britain intended to end the Turkish Sultan's custodianship of Islamic holy places in Saudi Arabia. To India's Muslims, the Sultan of Turkey was Khalifa, charged with the duty to protect the holy places. In May 1920, Turkey lost all her colonies, places like Mecca and Medina were placed under British guardianship. Indian Muslims were upset and wanted to restore Khilafat - the Khalifa's lordship. This was an erroneous understanding of Islam as pointed out by J.W. Hore "there is no canon which lays down that the Sultan will always remain the Khalifa" Subsequent events proved him right when in March 1924, Mustafa Kamal seized power in Turkey, abolished Khilafat, expelled the Sultan yet no Indian Muslim felt then that his Muslimness had diminished.

Writing in 1971, Indulal Yagnik quoted P as having said "Imagine our fighting for the Arabs of Arabia when we ourselves are held as slaves under British bayonets in our own land". Said P in 1920 "It has been a heartbreaking episode for the Indian Muslims, and how can Hindus stand unaffected when they see their fellow countrymen in distress". G wanted Indian Muslims to adopt the doctrine of nonviolence to protest against Khilafat.

Upset with the inactivity of the Government over the Jallianwalabag massacre (considered by many to be a secondary issue) and the Khilafat, G launched the non-cooperation movement. People left government jobs, lawyers have up their practice, charkhas were installed in large nos, hindus - muslims worked together for the success of the movement. But Hindu Muslim unity received a rude shock when infuriated by the tales of insults to their religious leaders, the Muslims of Malabar, who trace their ancestry to Arab immigrants, rose in revolt (Moplah Rebellion) first against the government and then against their Hindu landlords. An independent Muslim state was declared, murder - arson took place and Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. It increased the divide between hindus-muslims. Movements for strengthening the Hindu community were launched in reaction to these movements, in turn, caused disquiet among Muslims.

Foreign cloth was burnt. Once again P supported G. P switched to khadi. From 1921 most of P's dhotis and kurtas were spun by his daughter Manibhehn. In July 1921, Muhammad Ali said that in the present circumstances the Holy Shariat forbids every Muslim to serve or enlist himself in the British army. For this sedition, the Ali brothers were arrested, tried and sentenced. What Ali brothers did not know that Mustafa Kamal for whose sake he was inviting Muslims to leave the army, intended to destroy the Khilafat. G raised the tempo by making two decisions. One would be a boycott of the tour by the Prince of Wales. Second, a mass civil disobedience would start in a selected area. Taxes would be withheld to press for Swaraj. The honor of hosting the first battle was to go Surat's Bardoli taluka. The Prince's visit was boycotted wherever he went.

To a truce offer backed by Abul Kalam Azad, G said that he would withdraw under two conditions, one the Ali brothers are released, two there should be an agreement before hand on the composition and date of appointment of the grievances committee. While all this was happening P was in Gujarat raising funds, recruiting fighters, reconciling differences and rallying the public. Asked to mediate in the villagers fight with Jehangir in the village of Varad in Bardoli taluka, Vallabhai was for the first time described as Suba (ruler) of Gujarat, an expression used by many till he would be called Sardar in 1928.

Bardoli was making intense preparations for independence. The patidars were willing to support the fight. While G addressed the crowds, P did not speak but occupied himself in studying the people very carefully. Gandhi issued the govt an ultimatum. In seven days prisoners should be released, bans lifted, Congress workers allowed to work without hindrance for Swaraj and Khilafat. However, violence in Chauri Chaura forced G to call the whole thing off making him unpopular in the process.

The Raj realized that arresting G would produce no rebellion. The Muslims felt that G had, by calling off the movement betrayed Khilafat while the Hindus were demoralized. In such an environment G was arrested and sentenced to six years imprisonment for preaching disaffection.

1922 TO 29

Patel emerged from the loneliness following G's arrest to take charge of Gujarat. He raised a million rupees for the Gujarat Vidyapith. He set into motion a campaign against imported cloth. He wooed the untouchables. In the Kathiawad Political Conference was asked the abolition of untouchability in Patel's presence. With this P had ceased to be a leader of the Patidars and became the leader of Gujarat.

In September 1922, the Raj announced a levy of Rs 2 and a half lakhs on the residents of Borsad taluka. The Raj claimed the money as its expense on special anti-dacoity police posted in the taluka. Before taking on the Raj, P asked his trusted lieftants to tour villages and ascertain the facts. Their checking reinforced the view that the police were hand in glove with several dacoits, particularly Aliya. Sure about his facts, P had the residents of Borsad start their satyagraha. The Raj empowered officials to attach property or cattle in lieu of the tax with no success. Under pressure, the police arrested Aliya. The Raj was forced to rescind its earlier order. Once again P had secured a victory. Please note that he did not start the agitation till he had ascertained all facts. This style was an essential part of his character. G had on his release from jail praised P for his efforts in Borsad.

As President of the Ahemdabad Municipality, he had some solid achievements. Only a third of the city had drainage when

he took over. The complete city had it by the time ended his term in 1928. Half of the city was electrified by 1928. More water was drawn and distributed. He was called anti-Muslim when he supported a proposal for demolishing of the wall built by past Muslim rulers. A lull in India's fight with the Brits coincided with P's municipal spell between January 1924 and the summer of 1928.

The Fight of Bardoli - For two years the residents of Bardoli had been protesting against the proposals for increase in land revenue. In January 1928, the rates for Bardoli taluka were increased by 22 %. Simultaneously, 23 villages were raised to a higher-taxed category, which meant a double increase for their residents. The peasants decided not to accept the order.

They knew that the only man could help them Vallabhai Patel. Egged on by various deputation's to lead the struggle, he first asked a group of Patedars to visit the villages and give him a first hand report. The group subsequently assured G that they would continue with their struggle even if P was arrested. Look before you leap was P's time-tested policy. On Feb 4, 1928, he personally visited Bardoli and cross-examined representatives from 79 villages. Sure about the villager's determination to fight, he sent a letter to the revenue department asking them to appoint a tribunal to go into the question. If the tribunal were not appointed he would have no option but to ask the people not to pay revenue.

Next P went to Vankaner village and coached the peasants like a general trains his troops. "Keep your doors closed, locked and take to the fields, only to return home in the evening. Make friends with your bitterest enemies. Only that way you can present a united front. Make as many women attend these meetings as men for they might easily betray you if they did not learn to see their dear cattle seized before their own eyes. The news from every village must reach Bardoli daily and punctually". He told farmers not to underestimate the power of their unity. The organizing skills that P had shown were honed by his Bordoli experience, stint as municipal president.

The Raj made it clear that farmers who were not paying revenue within ten days of receiving notice would have to pay a 25 % fine. If they persisted in defaulting, their movables and

buffaloes would be attached or they would forfeit their lands. Fifty nine years later, a group of five who were part of the 1928 battle, said "He held everyone in his spell. People felt their day was incomplete if they hadn't heard the Sardar or read his speech in the Patrika".

It was in 1928 that someone referred to Vallabhai as the peasant's Sardar. Thus Sardar Patel (SP) was born. SP gained a significant point when the Raj reverted 22 of 32 upgraded villages to their original category. They still faced a 22 % increase but no longer on a higher base. The Raj used Pathans to recover property, seize cattle but had to withdraw them after public protests.

Most striking was the role of Bardoli's women. They began to outnumber men at meetings, gave SP spontaneous homage, their hard earned money and sang rustic songs of the misdeeds of the hapless government. The Raj warned the farmers that their land would be seized forever. Land was disposed off to outsiders. SP promised the peasants "Your land will come to you knocking at your door".

SP asked the kerosene merchant from Bharuch who had bought some land "to give thought to the retribution which will me meted out to him by God in this life". Funds began to pour in. By the end of June 2 lakh rupees had been given to the Satyagraha Fund that G had opened. In early June 63 village headmen and 11 talatis of Bardoli taluka resigned.

SP met the Governor but nothing was agreed. After negotiations, holding of cards close to the chest by SP, the Raj relented. Through an agreement of August 6, lands that had been sold were restored to their true owners, prisoners let off and headmen reinstated. This was agreed to provide the difference between the old and new revenue was deposited with the treasury. A Bombay businessman provided the funds. An inquiry committee was appointed to reexamine the revenue but decided against the increase in levy. So Patel now became Sardar Patel for ever.

Bardoli was SP's fight all the way. Neither the Congress nor the GPCC had any role to play. Bardoli had restored Indian's confidence in their ability to fight.

1934 TO 1939

1935 was a difficult year for SP. In the summer he got jaundice and laid low for a month. Then Mohanlal Pandya, a key associate in SP's fight in Kheda and Bardoli died in May. This was followed by infighting in the Gujarat Congress. In March 1935, plague hit Kheda. SP's work in defeating the epidemic was praised by the Brits too.

In 1936, SP had his nose operated upon during which time his moustache was removed. It never came back. Asked about the missing moust he said, " I have become a socialist".

Gandhi and Nehru - In 1934, when G sent in his resignation from the Congress to SP, G assigned a role to Nehru that SP would not have conceded on his own. Said G "I miss at this juncture, the association and advice of Nehru who is bound to the rightful helmsman of the organization in the near future".

After Rajagopalchari refused to become Congress President in 1937, Nehru told G that 8 months were not enough for him to revitalize the Congress, so he wanted a second term. Then G asked SP to withdraw his nomination, which he did. G however, clarified, that Nehru's appointment did not mean that the Congress endorsed Nehru's policies e.g. socialism or that it was committed to rejecting provincial power.

Patel and Nehru

1. After Nehru became Congress president in 1935, at the Lucknow Congress session, Nehru extolled the virtues of socialism. Though an acrimonious duel between SP and Nehru was witnessed, the two were not as divided as the Raj might have liked them to be. Soon, however, Nehru's preaching of socialism in his speeches and a remark that he had consented to the WorCom's composition against his better judgement created conflict. SP objected to Nehru championing a creed, which the Congress had not even accepted, and to the comment on the WorCom. Said G "the country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance".
2. In 1937 the Congress needed a new President. Nehru let it be known that he was ready to accept another term. SP

was offended by Nehru's apparent willingness to continue indefinitely as President. He wrote "The decked up groom prince is ready to marry at one stroke as many girls as he can find". With G's support, Nehru became president. SP became chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board. Thus Nehru became the vote catcher and SP the party man, controller of ministries. Similar to Vajpayee and Advani.

3. The Congress won an absolute majority in five out of the eleven provinces and emerged as the leading party in another four. Nehru pushed through a resolution in the U.P. provincial Congress against acceptance of office but SP, despite his renunciation of the 1935 Act, wanted Congress to seize the considerable powers it offered. Thanks to G's intervention, the Congress formed ministries in seven provinces.
4. The Nehru -SP relationship nearly broke down towards the end of 1937. The issue was the Congress ministries stand on law and order. Nehru was upset because Mumbai's law minister Munshi had not, cancelled curbs on the activities of some 20 Communists. Also disliked by Nehru was a decision of the Mumbai ministry to provide police protection to workers not heeding a Communist call to strikes. After S S Batlivala, a Mumbai socialist was arrested in Vellore for inciting violence, Nehru proposed a rule requiring a provincial ministry to consult the WorCom before making arrests of the Batliwala kind. Rajagopalchari, SP and G opposed Nehru's proposal. The policy of non-intervention by the Congress in the affairs of princely states found Nehru at odds with SP who agreed with G that the rulers of these states must not be pushed into the Raj's arms. Nehru sought a change in this policy but was repeatedly outvoted in the WorCom. Nehru decided to resign from the WorCom but did not. They never clashed head-on but SP's sympathies were there for all to see. He knew the value of silence and cost of unnecessary speech.

Election Results and Power

The premiership of Mumbai had been coveted by K.F. Nariman an able left leaning lawyer who headed the Congress in Mumbai. Confident of himself and taking SP for granted, he expected to be named leader of the assembly. SP had not forgotten Nariman's role in the 1934 elections to the central assembly and told him that he did not support him but would not harm him either. Just when everybody thought that Nariman would be premier, B G Kher became the first premier of Mumbai. Inspite of many attacks by Nariman and pro-Nariman journals, SP remained silent. G arranged for an impartial inquiry, which held Nariman responsible for hurting the Congress in 1934, and cleared SP of using any undue pressure in influencing the MLA's.

Led by Jinnah, the Muslim League had in 1937 won 20 of the 30 Muslim seats in the Mumbai assembly and 108 seats in the country. In May, Jinnah sent a feeler to G about Hindu-Muslim unity, congress-league coalitions were on his mind. This would have given the League a presence in every Congress ruled province and undermined Nehru, SP. G did not take up Jinnah's offer.

SP said that he would agree to Jinnah's plea if the League merged with the Congress. Jinnah ruled out a merger and the talks broke down. Munshi is not alone when he supports the Congress decision. In his view, League ministers in a Congress - League coalition would have been at the disposal of Jinnah to obstruct, defy, sabotage and by using veto, blackmail the Congress into submission. This was probably true in Mumbai but not in U.P. There was no way friction could have been avoided if the two had come together. Earlier, in January 1937, Jinnah and Nehru had clashed on one point - the Congress would never agree to Jinnah's view that what the Congress was to the Hindus the League was to Muslims.

In U.P, of the 228 seats in the Provincial Assembly, 64 were reserved for the Muslims of which 26 were won by the League, 28 by independent Muslims, others and one by the Congress. The Congress would accept two ministers from the Muslim League on certain conditions, the most important was that the League would cease to exist and merge with the Congress. This has been

held by many to be a turning point in the creation of Pakistan. Pakistan had been desired and agreed to long ago - read on.

Extracts from Struggle for Freedom by the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan. "Since 1920 the Congress had claimed to be the sole champion of Indian freedom. Now came the League saying we are different, you are not the sole custodians of Indian freedom. Nehru emphasized national unity, which meant that there could not be separate parties for Hindus and Muslims but one party i.e. the Congress, which represented every community in India. The desire to merge the League with it arose from that thought. The Congress view was primarily shaped by Nehru, who had a poor knowledge of the history of Muslims in India and their attitude towards Hindus during Mughal/ British rule. Nehru believed that the Hindu-Muslim problem, communalism of today, to be a latter-day phenomenon that is essentially political, economic and middle-class. Did Nehru forget the invasions of Mahmud Ghazni and Timur and their outrage on the Hindus? Neither did Nehru have any understanding of the Aligarh Movement and its founder or else he would never have held communalism to be recent phenomena. Inspite of his experience of ten years with the League he hoped for the weakning of communalism with the coming of social issues. It only shows that he was an idealist, unable or unwilling to accept facts.

Similarly Nehru's stand on national unity ignores some basic facts. It was the Congress which had in 1916 recognized the Muslims as a separate political entity, it was Gandhi by his action in respect of the Khilafat movement endorsed the view of Muslim leaders that they were Muslims first and Indians afterwards, that their interests were more bound up with the fate of the Muslim world outside India than that of India herself. Sacrificing the collaboration with the League was a mistake for which India had to pay dearly".

My personal view is that the seeds for Pakistan were sown long ago, has to do with the nature of Islam. A few reasons to support the view. In response to a delegation led by Aga Khan to Lord Minto on 01/10/1906, Minto assured the deputation "that in any system of representation in which it is proposed to introduce an electoral organization, the Mohammedan community should be represented as a community and its position should be estimated not merely on its numerical strength but in respect to its political importance and service it has rendered to the Empire". At a meeting on 30/12/1906 at Dacca, the Muslim League was established with the objectives to promote amongst the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British govt, to protect the political rights of Muslims etc. The Secretary of the League declared " We are not opposed to social unity of Hindus and Muslims but political unity no. The Congress and we do not share common political objectives. They want representative governments which means death for Musalmans". These are excerpts.

Said G's favorite Muhamad Ali at a public speech in 1908 "Muslims could not be expected to become martyrs to the unity of India and it would be a retrograde step in the political evolution of the Muslims to leave them at the mercy of an angelic majority". At the first annual session of the Muslim League held at Karachi on 29/12/1907 said Ghulam Mahmud "The Muhammadans have a political status, having been rulers of the land immediately before the advent of the British rule in India, and as such they deserve a larger representation than may appear warranted by arithmetical strength".

Excerpts from Muhammad Iqbal's presidential address in the Allahabad session of the Muslim League, Dec 1930- " Is it possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal and to reject it as a polity in favor of national politics, in which a religious attitude is not permitted to play a part? Therefore the construction of a polity on national lines, if it means displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a Muslim. I would like to see Punjab, N.W.F.P, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state, within or without the British empire".

At a conference held at Allahahabad on 01/01/1911 attended by 60 Hindus and 40 Muslims, said G "As a man of truth I honestly believe that Hindus should yield to the Muslims what the latter desire, and that they should rejoice in so doing".

It marks the beginning of the appeasement of the Muslims by the Congress that eventually led to Partition". End of B Vidya Bhavan extract. If co-opting the League in the U.P. govt might have prevented partition, how does one explain Pakistan's hate

campaign, cross border terrorism for the last fifty years. The Muslims of Pakistan have an Islamic state, thus, they must have been content Na! But no, destruction of Bharat is their sole objective.

As Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board, SP exercised supervision over Congress's provincial ministries. He laid down certain rules that were to be followed by all to create a strong central authority. The Raj recognized his role and Viceroy Linlithgow noted in the summer of 1938, that SP was a figure of growing importance. Narayan Khare, the premier of the Central Provinces took on SP and was humiliated, had his wings clipped. People accused SP of being an autocrat, fascists, dictatorial but he was unfazed. Whether or not this affected SP's popularity, the Khare episode strengthened SP's image as the tough man of the Congress.

Subsequent to Subhas Bose' defeat of G/SP's candidate Pattabhi's in the Congress President election of 1939 the divide within the Congress increased. SP's deep conviction that the Congress must not give up G for Subhas was as deep as Subhas's conviction that he was the need of the hour. Abused by many of Subhas's admirers his self-control was admirable. On an occasion when he heard that Bose had called him undemocratic he said "the Lion becomes a king by birth, not by an election in the jungle". This strengthened his image as a toughie.

When the 2nd World War broke out in 1938, Australia and Canada were asked if they wanted to join the war but Indians were taken for granted. Incensed with the Raj were SP and G but they did not want to break with the Raj. Nehru however, was in a combative mood. Meeting under SP's chairmanship, the Congress Premiers had agreed that cooperation with the British must be wholehearted if an understanding were to be arrived at between the Raj and the Congress. Nehru had indicated that the Congress Ministries might have to resign.

The Congress WorCom met at Wardha met in September 1939 with Jinnah staying out. After heated discussions the WorCom sided with Nehru, its mood affected by the Raj's refusal to consult India before drafting her into the war and even more by a change by the British Parliament that empowered the Viceroy to override provincial governments, reducing the Congress Ministries to the

status of Viceroy's officials. G tried out his idea of nonviolent support to the Brits but it was shot down.

Discussing the event 11 years later, SP said "If only we had followed Bapu's way fully the situation would have been totally different. Bapu was ready to offer moral support. But Jawarharlal stood in the way. If Nehru had agreed with Gandhi's view, there would have been no Pakistan". SP would add, referring to a Linlithgow-Patel meeting in October 1939, "that if the Congress does not support me I'll have to take the Muslims help".

However, SP did not oppose Nehru. G said "the Sardar's stand was affected by popular opinion which shared Nehru's view that friendship between India and England is possible but only on equal terms". Reluctant to let go power SP accepted the reality of the divide. G and the WorCom asked two things of Britian. One would India be free at the end of the war and meanwhile representative Indians would be associated with power at the center as well.

The Raj rejected the Congress proposal but made a counter offer. Indians would have constitutional talks, not freedom, at the end of the war, during the pendency of the war they would be granted a decorative consultative committee.

The League promised the British govt support on two conditions. First that the Muslims must be assured of fair play and justice in Congress ruled provinces. Second, the British govt must give an undertaking that no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made without the approval and consent of the League nor any Constitution framed without League approval.

The Congress asked Ministries to resign. SP had remembered to ask the speakers of the Congress majority legislatures to adjourn their houses sine die. This was to deny Congress's foes an opportunity to form ministries. The Viceroy began to depend of the League. For all practical purposes, Jinnah was given a veto on further constitutional progress.

Sardar and Muslims - 1. SP's fight with the Dewan of Rajkot evoked from Lord Lothian, a pro-Indian Briton, a comment that was true and depressing "The people as yet have had no experience

of representative institutions, and if the Congress pushes them too far, it may push the Muslims out of India altogether". SP may have sensed this truth when he accepted without demur G's decision to hand over victory to Virawala. The hues of Rajkot were heard in Bhavnagar as well. A crowd of 30 Muslims armed with knives, swords tried in May 1939, to attack SP who was being taken out in a procession of the local Praja Mandal but was saved because others received the blows.

1939 TO 1945

When the Congress Ministries resigned Jinnah told the Muslims that they had experienced deliverance while SP tried to show that the perception was flawed. Sir Francis Wylie, Governor of the Central Provinces felt that "the accusations of gross anti-Muslim bias on the part of the Congress ministries were moonshine". Yet the image was stronger than reality. Responding to Jinnah, large number of Muslims observed Deliverance Day on December 1942. Aware of truth, the Raj gave too much importance to the Muslim view. Zetland spoke of a Congress as "Hindu organization which should reach a settlement with the Muslims" to which the Sardar retorted -

> *"We ask the Viceroy for the objectives of the war. We did not receive any direct reply but now we are being told to go and settle with the Muslims, that is, with the Muslim League. If we do succeed, we shall probably be told, Go and settle with the Indian princess. When that happens they will say, what about the Europeans who have so many interests in the country - You the British are the real cause of all arguments. You introduced communal electorates".*

Wanting to blunt Jinnah's arguments that the Congress represented the Hindus, G did at the end of 1939 press the presidency on Maulana Azad. In 1940, even as Azad asserted that Muslims were part of the indivisible unity i.e. Indian nationality, the League resolved in Lahore for separation for Pakistan. It also announced total opposition to any Congress-Raj agreement that did not concede Pakistan. The quam heeded Jinnah, period.

Gandhi and Patel - G's approach to the Hindu-Muslim question were not SP's. Willing to listen to genuine complaints he would

not tolerate baseless allegations against the Congress. With its back to the wall in World War 2, some like Rajagopolachari felt that England must be helped. Patel agreed but G could not, with his ahimsa, endorse Congress's participation in a violent war. A series of talks with the Raj had convinced G of a Raj-League nexus to foil the Congress. Sharing the thinking of Rajaji that Britain might accept the Congress demands and welcomes an offer of active assistance in the war, SP voted for the proposal in the WorCom. Nehru and G were both against it but SP's backing ensured that the proposal carried through. SP had for the first time in 22 years gone against G but G was confident that SP would be back with him. Within a week SP and Rajaji wavered. The Raj proved G correct. A Viceregal statement said that if the Raj, Congress, League and the Princes reached an agreement, a certain number of politicians might be included in Executive Council of the Viceroy, who would however have the last word. At the end of the war, India would offer not freedom but a body to devise the framework of the new constitution. SP was relieved but his going against G was only a precursor of the 1947 gulf between the two of them.

A Civil Disobedience Movement was started in Oct 1940 that petered out. It was resumed in early 1941, nearly 15,000 were imprisoned including SP. Due to failing health, he was released in October. This policy has been criticized by many due to unwillingness of Nehru, G to embarrass the Brits and appears to be a desire to take the wind out of the sails of Subhas Bose's party that had begun its campaign of Civil Disobedience in right earnest. On December 7, Japan swept across the Pacific and the WorCom following Rajaji's lead accepted the impossibility of defending India non-violently against a Japanese invasion. Suspending satyagraha the WorCom offered cooperation to the Allies if India's freedom was declared. Much against G and SP's wishes, at the AICC session at Wardha in January 1942 was the above resolution passed.

It was on 15/01/1942 that G designated Nehru as his successor. He said "You cannot divide water by repeatedly striking it with a stick. It is just as difficult to divide us-When I am gone he will speak my language". Why did G prefer Nehru to Patel? One was

that SP was less popular than Nehru with the country's leftists, youth and Muslims. Two age and health went against SP. Three, G knew that SP was there to supply a corrective, when necessary to Nehru, who would be primus inter spares and not the sole guide. Fourthly, G may have felt that Nehru was more likely than SP to resent a number two position. He was certain that SP's commitment had nothing to do with rank.

Five was SP's distance from the Muslims. "You should try to learn Urdu" G advised SP in a letter. SP' reply showed that the Wardha announcement had not made him any less frank or free with G. Sardar Patel said " Sixty-seven years are over and this earthen vessel is near to cracking. It is very late to learn Urdu but I will try. All the same, your learning Urdu does not seem to have helped. The more you try to get close to them, the more they flee from you". Said G later "Those like SP who have followed me without question cannot be called heirs. Nehru has the drive that no one has in the same measure".

The war had pricked the bubble of the white man's superior civilization. Seething under major losses, the U.S. had urged Churchill to make a move towards G and the Congress. Under pressure, Churchill nominated Sir Stafford Cripps to take new proposals to Delhi. Cripps in early 1942 offered India full Dominion Status after the war, with the right of secession from the Commonwealth and a post war Constituent Assembly whose members would be chosen by provincial legislatures or nominated by the princes.

For now, India could have a national government. In other words, once India became a dominion, every province would have the right to secede. Cripps incorporated this clause to get Jinnah's acceptance but he gave the Congress a verbal view that no province would in fact demand that right. (why are we Indians so gullible to be taken in by verbal assurances, Indira Gandhi took Bhutto's words on Kashmir while signing the Simla Agreement in 1972). Jinnah welcomed the proposals because it implied Pakistan but rejected the scheme because it gave provinces and not what he called the Muslim nation the right to separate. G and SP opposed Cripps proposals and accused the Muslims to be intransigent.

Though they did not realize, SP, Nehru and Azad had in their answer to Cripps, taken a step towards the acceptance of Pakistan. The WorCom clarified that it could not "think in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their clear and established will". Although SP was associated with this comment, in all probability it was drafted by Nehru and desired in the first instance by Azad.

Cripps proved to the world that India was hopelessly divided. Starting with the premise that Japan was enemy number one, Rajaji proposed peace with the Muslim League. G however, wanted Britain to leave India after which Hindus and Muslims would settle their disputes. Guided by Rajaji, the Madras Congress legislators proposed that the Congress should accept the League's claim for separation of Muslim Majority areas. Deeply hurt SP took on Rajaji publicly. G supported SP. Unwilling to change his views, Rajaji resigned from the Congress and the assembly.

SP was the first to agree and Nehru the last to agree with G's proposal of Quit India. A call to the British to withdraw from India implying that the Congress would struggle to enforce it was the crux of G's proposal. At the Allahabad WorkCom the Gandhi/ Prasad draft was approved on April 30 morning. In the afternoon Prasad withdrew it in favor of Nehru's draft to maintain party unity. Kriplani recorded the reversal followed a statement from Azad that he would resign if the Gandhi draft was accepted. Despite being upset, SP accepted Nehru's draft. It did not say that the Brits must withdraw from India but said the Congress would find it impossible to consider any schemes which, even in partial measure, British control over India. When Gandhi heard about the change he told Kriplani " You should have allowed the Maulana to resign".

G and SP agreed with Rajaji that the Brits were unlikely to leave India, they envisaged a struggle. Although Nehru / Azad were against Quit India, any patience or passivity by the Congress at that time would have isolated the Congress, allowing violent elements and Subhas Bose to capture the Indian mind. Quit India was for Indian wars than British. The movement did gather momentum forcing the Raj to arrest top Congress leaders. SP, Nehru and Azad with nine others were taken to Ahmednagar fort

where they spent the next three winters. All this happened in 1942. In the words of the Viceroy "by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857".

If the Congress had been saved by Quit India, Jinnah had been strengthened; the Raj let its sunshine fall on the league. SP would maintain till the end that Quit India was correct. But in a suppressed layer of his soul, lay several thoughts of blame. Yet a significant thought had taken place in his mind. "Next time he would think twice before going by Gandhi's instinct". Inwardly SP was prepared to disobey G in the future. Interestingly Nehru would justify Quit India in 1956 " I don't think the action we took in 1942 could have been avoided or ought to have been avoided. If we had been passive then, I think we would have lost all her strength".

Although the movement collapsed within two months it would be a mistake to suppose that it was a dismal failure. The violent upsurge of 1942 left no one in doubt that freedom's battle had begun in right earnest. This movement, the last rising of the people against the Brits, was non-violent, not planned nor led by G, to give him credit would be wrong.

Jailed SP read and read. Mahtab said, "he did not seem to have a scholarly bent of mind while Nehru wrote, "it is difficult for Vallabhai to think internationally". These comments should be read with the assessment of Pattabhi who wrote in Oct 1942 of the Sardar as "one who inspires awe as well as reference, who is rich in anecdote, flowing in sardonic wit and humor, seemingly ignorant of the current of thought in the world and yet fully conversant with their intimate details and courses, having in him embedded deep in his heart and brain numerous details which explain the politics of the past one score and seven years".

Azad and Nehru disagreed with Quit India while SP supported it. Knowing each other's views they avoided arguments by not discussing the subject. As for the ability to include international factors in national strategies, SP, as time would show, probably possessed in greater measure than Nehru. Earlier we note Nehru's judgement on SP's mind "lucid but may not be deep". No wonder SP and Kripalani sensed a superiority complex in Nehru. Weighing the men in Ahmednagar, Pattabhi called SP, "the most wise".

Unwell, G was released in May 1944. After conferring with Rajaji, G told the Raj that he was prepared to ask the WorCom suspend the disobedience movement and Congress would cooperate fully with the War Effort if a national govt. responsible to the Central Assembly was formed. It was similar to Azad's proposal but SP did not want the WorCom to yield to the Raj behind G's back. The Raj spurned the offer. The second move was towards Jinnah. In his search for the settlement with the League, G went 14 times in September to Jinnah's house in Mumbai. SP, Azad and Nehru disliked this. G's proposal that the Congress and League must jointly form a national government on the understanding that the contiguous Muslim majority areas could secede following independence, if separation was the preference of their adult populations.

G was conceding Pakistan through the Rajaji formula but Jinnah did not find it large enough or sovereign enough because G wanted bonds of alliance between Hindustan and Pakistan written into any treaty of separation. Jinnah wanted partition under British auspices and before independence. It is possible that subsequent to his release SP admonished Rajaji for instigating G into his talks with Jinnah.

On Gandhi's authorization, Bhulabhaidesai in January 1945, held talks with Liaqat Ali Khan to initial a pact that meant a national govt. would be formed with five members each from the Congress and League with two representing other groups. Within a month Liaqat denied any knowledge of the pact. Inspite of having a copy initialed by Liaqat, Desai preferred not to call the bluff. Jinnah disagreed because it did not bar from including a Muslim on the list. SP had reacted violently against the concession.

In April 1945, SP was transferred to Yeravada jail in Pune. The war ended a month later.

1945 TO 47

Viceroy Wavell announced that WorCom would be released and that Indian leaders would be invited to Simla for talks. Wavell offered an Executive Council with an equal number of caste Hindus and Muslims plus a scheduled caste member and a few belonging

to the minorities. Congress accepted but Jinnah rejected because he wanted to have the absolute right to select all Muslims. The Talks Failed. Jinnah's stock soared. Ten months G knocked at his doors, now the Viceroy yielded to him. Muslim leaders saw a barren feature for themselves unless they were linked to Jinnah. By virtue of handing over to Jinnah the power of veto, Wavell had practically ensured the creation of Pakistan. Softness was not part of Sardar. On August 9, 1945 he said "The British talk of Hindu Muslim quarrels but who has thrust the burden on their shoulders. If they are sincere let them hand over to the Congress, league or international arbitration. Give me just a week's rule over Britain, I will create such disagreements that England, Wales and Scotland will they will fight one another for ever".

On Subhash Bose, SP had earlier claimed him as a colleague and fellow fighter and was willing to help the dependants / personnel of the Indian National Army. SP admired Subhas's bravery and Bose's supporters SP for his Quit India stand. He had done in 1942 what Subhas had asked for in 1939.

In 1945 Labor replaced the Tories. Atlee decided to hold fresh elections to central and provincial assemblies. G was against the Congress taking funds from industrialists but SP knew that it was not practical. SP's post Ahmednagar independence was sensed by G in early 1946 said he "Sardar is as dear as a son to me". Earlier SP was brother. A younger brother listens to the elder but a son leads his own life.

1945 election results showed that except in N.W.F.P. the league commanded the Muslim vote. The non-Muslim vote was behind the Congress, which won 56 seats in the Central Assembly and 930 in the provinces, but the League obtained all the 30 seats in the Central Assembly and 427 of the 507 Muslim seats in the provinces. Notice that an also ran party in 1937 was in 1945 the Congress's main challenger. Reasons were, free run enjoyed by the League after the ministries resigned, Jinnah's grit, the quam's feeling that the British must restore power to those from whom they had taken it, the Raj's encouragement, G's knocks at Jinnah's door, Wavell's capitulation before Jinnah at Simla. The Congress formed eight provincial ministries and the League two, i.e. Sind and Bengal.

Unlike Nehru, who imagined Hindu-Muslim unity when it did not exist SP was frank about the reality. He had no difficulty in describing nonreserved seats as Hindu seats. His work amongst the Muslims remained minimal. He did not move in the Muslim world and they did not move in his. While G spoke as an Indian, SP found it natural to speak as a Hindu.

If India elects for independence, said PM Attlee; she has a right to do so. The Cabinet Mission led by Stafford Crips was sent to solve the Indian problem, convert the Executive Council into an Interim govt. so that Indians could no longer accuse the Brits of clinging to India. Secession was the Congress's fear; submergence was the quam's. A Pakistan consisting of Sindh, NW.F.P. Punjab, Bengal and Assam was the league's demand. The Congress was not too sure what it wanted, a loose federation or a strong center. SP and Nehru wanted a strong center though Nehru, Gandhi and Azad were agreeable to a weaker center if he could retain the Muslim majority areas. Less willing to rule out a settlement Azad proposed a loose all Indian union with substantial provincial autonomy to the Greater Pakistan area provided the compulsory link between different parts of India is not interfered with. This was the origin of the 'Federation within Federation' concept proposed by Cripps. During the long talk's SP's interventions were rare but significant.

He used them to reject Hindu-Muslim parity at the center. He was distrustful of the League. The talks brought out Jinnah's revulsion to be part of the Indian Union. Cripps prepared the Cabinet Mission Plan with a Center dealing with defence, foreign affairs and communications and the provinces controlling the rest. The provinces were free to form 'Groups' in exercise of their autonomous powers i.e. two or more states could join to become a bigger state. (May 16 proposal).

Muslim groups in the West and the East were suggested. Having voted against being part of the Muslim group, yet N.W.F.P. and the Assam were to be part of the Muslim group. The step by step approached ensured work on the Indian Constitution would start only after the two Groups had been formed. The Congress was told that the idea of Hindu-Muslim parity in the Constituent Assembly was given up while the League was assured if the

majority of the Muslim members felt that a subject was communal, the Federal Court would adjudicate if the Assembly or President thought otherwise.

The Congress and the League interpreted the plan to their advantage. The League thought it had got Pakistan while the Congress believed that the demand for Pakistan had been rejected. Also, the Mission told the League privately and not the Congress on May 16 that a simple majority votes in the Muslim majority would decide grouping.

While some Congress leaders were willing to consider groupings, SP's and G's clear conviction that compulsory grouping was wrong and a stepping stone to Greater Pakistan meant other leaders had to fall in line. Delighted that Jinnah's main demand for Pakistan had been rejected; SP was worried about a weak centre and the prospect of Assam becoming part of the League's grouping. Worried he told Wavel that he was opposed to the May 16 statement. The Congress waited for the League's response and its approach to its second objective i.e. its proposal for an Interim govt.

After two rejections Wavell proposed a Council (called June16 proposal) of 14 with 6 Hindus, 5 Muslims, a Sikh, a Parsi and a Christian. Agreeable initially, SP changed his mind after reading Jinnha's letter to the Viceroy that appeared in the Statesman on June 20. The letter asked, would Jinnah be consulted if the other minority members of the Council were unwilling to join, the League have a veto on every communal issue, could the Congress substitute a Hindu with a Muslim. After evidence of Jinnah's attitude, SP felt that a coalition with him was not worth considering.

The June 16 offer incorporated a statement that in the event of the two parties being unwilling to form a coalition, the Viceroy would proceed to invite that party which agrees to the May 16 proposal to form the Interim govt.

After lots of deliberation, the Congress read Sardar went against Gandhi's wishes and accepted the May 16, 1946 proposal. Keen to install a League Congress coalition, Cripps and Co said one thing to the Congress and another to the League. Getting Congress into power and preventing the League from obtaining

an inflated share were SP's principal goals (may be he did not want to repeat the mistake of 1939 when the Ministries resigned putting the League in an advantageous position). Said Wavell to the King on 8.7.46 "SP is the recognized tough man of the Congress Working Committee and by far the most formidable character amongst them. He is the probably the only one of them capable of standing up to Gandhi".

Having consented to May and June 16, Jinnah expected to be invited to form the Interim govt. Jinnah was furious. After considering Grouping as an essential feature of their scheme, the Raj accepted the Congress's rejection of grouping. SP's firmness and Cripps cleverness prevented a Jinnah govt from being formed. Jinnah ! was to extract a heavy price later.

After 97 grueling days, Cripps left India saying both parties having accepted May 16, a new coalition govt would be attempted after a short interval.

Gandhi elects Nehru - Aware that the next Congress President would be India's first defacto Premier, Azad wanted to continue to be President. Nehru had his own ambitions while SP was backed by many PCCs. Nine days before the date for withdrawal of nominations i.e. on April 20, G indicated his preference for Nehru but the party wanted SP. 12 of the 15 PCCs had nominated him. Knowing that no PCC chief would propose Nehru, G asked Kriplani to propose Nehru's name during a WorCom meeting in Delhi. As soon as Nehru had been proposed Kriplani withdrew his nomination and handed over to SP a fresh piece of paper with the latter's withdrawal written on it, so that Nehru was elected unopposed. Said G to Nehru. No PCC chief has recommended your name but the WorCom has. Nehru kept quiet. Obtaining confirmation that Nehru would not take second place, G asked SP to sign the statement that Kriplani had given him. SP did so at once as he had withdrawn in 1929,1936 and 1939.

Why did G select Nehru? One was that Nehru, a Harrow boy, Cambridge graduate; barrister was required to carry out negotiations with the Brits. Two was Nehru's rapport with a section of the Muslims contracted with SP's aloofness. That Nehru will not take second place, is better known abroad than Sardar and will make India play a major role in international affairs were

other reasons. Finally G realized that Nehru's selection would not deprive India of Patel's services but denial would drive Nehru into the opposition.

On assuming Presidency Nehru went back on May 16 agreement making Jinnah furious. When the Raj refused to remove the impression that the Congress had accepted May 16, Jinnah got the League to revoke the acceptance of May 16 and launch "Direct Action" to achieve Pakistan.

Aghast at Nehru's blunder SP wrote "Nehru often acts with childlike innocence-but we must not allow anger to get the better of ourselves. But inspite of all his innocent indiscretions, his unparalleled enthusiasm and passion for freedom make him restless and drive him to a pitch of impatience where he forgets himself. Opposition sometimes drive him mad as he is impatient".

Jinnah's plan had the potential to torpedo Wavell's plans; he was willing to consider an Interim Govt dominated by the Congress. Nehru however, wanted an assurance from the Viceroy that he would figure only as a figurehead. Not knowing what to do it is believed that Wavell through an intermediary ascertained SP's views. Patel conveyed that the Congress would not insist on the Viceroy's role as a figurehead if it were asked to form the govt. The WorCom on August 8, agreed with SP overriding Nehru's views. SP's conviction had prevailed once more.

The Interim Govt was sworn in September 1946. The Direct Action Day on August 16 rocked Calcutta where H.S. Suhrawardy headed a League dominated Coalition. The Statesman referred to it as "the appalling carnage, the worst communal riot in India's communal history". When the Hindus retaliated peace was restored within a week. According to a rough estimate, 5000 were dead, over 15,000 injured and 15,000 homeless.

Convinced that the League had to be brought into the govt, Wavel asked Nehru, who in a weak moment agreed. Shocked by Nehru's decision, SP did not protest hard enough when the League joined the govt without rescinding its rejection of May 16. The League wanted Home, SP throated to resign. Eventually a key portfolio Finance was offered to Liaqat Ali. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, one of the League's nominees said that their intent of entering the

govt was to get a foothold to fight for our cherished goal for Pakistan. Depts controlled by the League became or were seen to be as entrenched Muslim camps.

Early October, about 300 Hindus were killed in Noakali in eastern Bengal. Temples were destroyed, women raped and Hindus forcibly converted. G went to Noakali to instill courage amongst the Hindus and tolerance amongst the Muslims. As a backlash, app 7,000 Muslims were killed in Bihar. Patel visited Bihar with Liaqat.

After entering the govt. Nehru vacated the President's chair. Azad was keen to replace him but SP is believed to have pulled various strings in different parts of the country to ensure that Kriplani and not Azad became party president. Eventually Azad joined the cabinet in January 1947 while Kriplani felt that the party president no longer as important as before since the party was now in power. In October 1946 SP moved into their new home at 1 Aurangzeb Road. He appointed Vidya Shankar as his confidential aid. Though not a member of the ICS, V P Menon had begun govt service as a clerk and by sheer merit risen to the Viceroys Reforms Commission. The Patel Menon understanding started in August 1946, was key to the transfer of power, division of Bharat and the merger of the princely states into India. Another valuable official was H M Patel, ICS.

The Constituent Assembly visualized by May 16 has been formed about Sep 1946 but never met till December. Jinnah followed rejection of May 16 by asking the League members of the Assembly to boycott it. While Congress asked the Viceroy to get the league to accept May 16, the League wanted the Congress's consent to compulsory grouping. HMG's response was to invite Viceroy Wavell and five Indian leaders to London. SP did not go, Nehru went after a personal appeal by Attlee. The outcome was a victory for the League.

HMG declared that Bengal could vote Assam into a Muslim group even if Assam wanted to stay out and Sind, NWFP could be compelled to join the Group dominated by Punjab. The Raj's doublespeak was out in the open in favor of the League. SP knew this all along, which is why he avoided the London talks. By not going Nehru might have postponed defeat but neither SP or

Nehru were in a position to prevent it. SP took a serious view of the last paragraph of the London declaration where HMG stated that no constitution drafted by the constituent assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented would be forced on unwilling parts of the country. This was in SP's opinion an encouragement of Pakistan and a reversal of Attlee's words of March 1946 that "we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority". In any case, said SP, if Britain wanted to leave India, HMG should name a date of departure. Jinnah would be bound to compromise.

The Patel- Gandhi disagreement of June 1946 is in contrast with SP's statement to the WorkCom in 1942 "I have placed myself in G's hands. I feel that he is instinctively right". Patel - Nehru relationship was tested at the Congress Annual Session at Meerut. Nehru had unexpectedly said that the Congress ministers are likely to resign. Not being a party decision, speaking in Mumbai a fed days later, SP said Congress has no intention of quitting office. Addressing the advocates of Pakistan, SP said "Whatever you do, do it by the method of peace and love. You may succeed. But the sword will be met by a sword". Cheers greeted the statement, coming after Noakali, the timing was not exactly right. It appears that Nehru and Kriplani complained to G after which G wrote to SP who wrote back. Their differences were now in the open.

The inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly was held in December 1946. As a result of HMG's London declaration the League and the Princely states boycotted it. Being part of the govt. the Congress had to attend. The League refused to say yes to May 16, to which SP/Nehru wanted on the expulsion of League Minister's. Wavell refused on which the Congress said it would resign.

They however changed their mind on February 20, when Attlee said that Britain would quit India not later than June 1948 handing over "to some form of central govt or in some areas to the existing provincial govts or in such other way as may seem most reasonable" While this is what SP had asked for, Indians all over were thrilled. Menon had outlined to SP a scheme for transfer of power with Partition somewhere in Dec 46/ January 1947. SP

did not visualize Pakistan in Dec 46 but was now willing to see India divided.

What were the arguments used by Menon to convince SP that partition was the best bet? Menon recounts. First it was better to see the country divided than see it move towards civil war. Second by consenting to Dominion status, the Congress would gain British goodwill which would help in bringing the princes around and their cooperation since the Brits commanded the armed forces in India. Three while the three tier Mission Plan was unworkable, partition would enable the emergence of a strong Central Govt. Finally once the League was given Pakistan, it would lose its capacity to obstruct the Congress in the rest of India and the Congress would be free to abolish Muslim electorates. (Reason 4 was flawed since Pakistan has continued a pain the neck.)

Also the experience coalition with the League has disgusted him and the possibility of the Raj extending its rule to keep peace in India infuriated him. Governing India with the League was SP's nightmare. SP and Muslims - In response to a suggestion by Sir Norman Smith that the League be offered 7 seats in the Council to the Congress's 6 SP said " If you think that generosity will placate the Muslim Oliver Twist, then you do not understand either the Muslim mind or the situation". SP to Cripps on 15.12.1946 " If strong action had been taken or allowed to be taken, when Direct Action Day was fixed by the Muslim League, all this colossal loss of life and property and the blood-curling events would not have happened. The Viceroy took the contrary view and every action of his since the Great Calcutta Killing has been in the direction of encouraging the Muslim League and putting pressure on us towards appeasement". The Viceroy's Journal confirms SP's charges.

The deadline for the Brits departure and Attlee's word that power might directly go to the provincial govts triggered a struggle for their control. The League dominated the Bengal ministry, was in possession of Sind, could count of Baluchistan but Punjab was not in its hands and so were N.W.F.P. and Assam. It failed in Assam, raised the Islam in danger bogey in NW.F.P. and earned sympathy when its supporters were arrested while in Punjab Muslims picketed govt buildings, hostels and hoisted the League

flag over them. After the state premier Khizr resigned, the Raj unwisely asked the League leader in the legislature, Khan of Mamadot to form the govt. In response Master Tara Singh urged Sikhs youths to respond. Lahore Silk Market was set ablaze and Amristsar now a Veritable Inferno. Riots followed. The Mamdot ministry was dismissed.

Hindus and Sikhs demanded partition, SP agreed. The WorCom resolution of March 8, 1947 supported it implying that Bengal be partitioned too. The resolution was a public admission that the Congress was ready to yield Pakistan. G was upset and wrote to SP asking him to explain the Punjab resolution. SP - G differences once more. G did not know that on March 4 four days before the resolution, SP had written to Jinnah's close friend K Dwarkadas "If the League insists on Pakistan, the only alternative is the division of Punjab and Bengal".

SP and G differences - SP and G differed over the demand of the Bihar Muslim League for a commission of inquiry into the Bihar riots of November 1946. SP and the Raj felt that an inquiry would worsen the situation. G hoped the inquiry would unite the two communities displaying a lack of reality while SP was allergic to anything that looked like appeasement of the League. The Raj supported SP on this. SP's motives were national. In the summer of 1946 he agreed with Cripps and G and again in the summer of 1946 he agreed with Mountbatten and not G.

Inspite of his reputation as India's tough man, Mountbatten very quickly detected a twinkle in Sardar's eye. But SP revealed his toughness to Mountbatten when the latter, after citing a pledge of 25 yrs service by the Raj in 1945 to members of the ICS and IPS, sought compensation from India for loss of careers for officers who chose or were asked to leave on transfer of power. SP put his foot down; no compensation would be paid.

G last bid to prevent partition - Returning from Bihar on March 31, 1947 G called on the Viceroy and suggested to Mountbatten that the Interim govt be dissolved and Jinnah invited to form a Cabinet of his choice. As long as the Congress thought that Jinnah was pursuing India's interest, Congress would cooperate with Jinnah and not use its majority in the Central Assembly to block his ministry. If he wishes Jinnah could continue to advocate Pakistan, provided he eschewed force. Azad agreed with G's plan and thought it would be the quickest way to stop bloodshed. Nehru and SP opposed the plan though it was never put to Jinnah. V.P. Menon was opposed to the scheme. Yet there was a moment on April 10, when Mountbatten thought that G's proposal might fly. In the middle of a three hour meeting with Jinnah he said "we do not know how sincerely - that it was a day dream of mine to be able to put the Central Govt under the Prime Ministership of Mr Jinnah". Jinnah was too surprised to react but some 35 minutes later Jinnah "suddenly made a reference out of the blue" to the Viceroy's proposal. At the WorCom only Ghafar Khan sided with G. Thus G admitted defeat.

Life is all about turnarounds. In 1940, writing in the Harijan "The Muslim League is frankly communal and wants to divide India into two parts". He wrote in April 1942 "If the vast majority of Muslims regard themselves as a separate nation having nothing in common with the Hindus, no power on earth can compel them to think otherwise. And if they want to partition India on that basis, they must have it, unless Hindus want to fight against such a division". In 1944, G visited Jinnah's house 14 times conceding Pakistan through the Rajaji formula but Jinnah did not find it large enough then yet today he was fighting against it. What is common however, is his appeasement of the League. G told Azad on 03/03/1947 "If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow the Congress to accept it".

SP looked for opportunities to show his goodwill to Britain. He appreciated the fact that Britain inspite of domestic problems were handling India's partition. But he retained his bluntness. He called Abell, the Secretary of the Muslim League. Responding to fresh incidents of violence against Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab and NW.F.P. He said to Mountbatten "There is a civil war on and you are doing nothing to stop it. You won't govern yourself and you won't let the Central Govt govern". Law and Order was a state subject and there was little SP could do to curb riots. Mountbatten wanted Williams as the Home Secretary while SP wanted Banerjee. Mounbatten has lied by saying that bragging over his victory over

Patel in Banerjee's appointment but the reality was different. SP wanted Banerjee period.

Inspite of what appears above, SP on April 25 told Mountbatten that if the League were to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan read as understood by the Congress then partition could be avoided. Jinnah too was tired of the Congress League fights and requested Mountbatten not to ask him to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan. In separate public speeches, Nehru conceded partition on April 20 and SP on May 9, 1947.

SP prudence has not ended even if his silence has. He will concede Pakistan if the League insists, the British decide on it because the Congress has always stood against coercion. Between Dec 46 when SP was converted to partition and May-June 47 when the Indian public was converted, SP had displayed tactics of a high order. In patience, timing, choice of argument and willingness of others willing to advocate a remedy, he provided a lesson to Gopalachari who five years ago had been thrown into wilderness for preaching the same remedy. SP kept quiet until it was time to say that his search for alternatives had failed.

Realizing the pitfalls of Plan Balkhan, SP agreed to Dominion Status with V P Menon. Mountbatten secured Nehru's approval but was concerned about G's views. SP assured Nehru that it was his responsibility to convince G. Nehru "finally asked SP if in that case he should go ahead". If Nehru was impuslive in public and hesitant alone, SP was cautious in public, was bold when the moment of personal decision came. The new plan envisaged the transfer of power to two entities, the existing Constituent Assembly and another formed by members from Sind, Baluchistan, West Punjab and East Bengal. Both would Dominion Status. In no way would this mean less than independence, either could leave the Commonwealth when desired. The N.W.F.P. would choose between India and Pakistan through a referendum as would Assam's Sylhet district, which had a Muslim majority.

Though G felt excluded, SP's WorCom colleagues acknowledged Patel's crucial role. Sarojini Naidu called him on May 11, 1947 "the man of decision and man of action in our councils". Said Kriplani "When we are faced with thorny problems, and G's advice is not available, we consider Sardar Patel as our leader". G was against the plan but was in a minority. SP's Pakistan was sharply delimited. Jinnah had been pressing for joint control of Calcutta. Mountbatten sent Menon to get SP's approval on the matter. SP said "Not even for six hours". Jinnah had earlier demanded an 800-mile corridor link between East and West Pakistan. SP called the claim "such fantastic nonsense as not to be taken seriously".

At 3 pm on June 3, Kriplani's letter conveying Congress's acceptance was delivered to the Viceroy's house. Jinnah explained he could not sign on the League's behalf until the party Central Council met, which it was not likely to meet in the next few days. An exasperated Mountbatten said a nod from Jinnah at the next meeting would suffice. Next day Mountbatten casually announced "I think the transfer could be about 15th August".

The Partition plan was ratified by the WorCom on June 2. Purshottam Tandon of U.P. and Choithram Gidwani were against it but SP delivered a key note address. "I fully appreciate the fears of our brothers from (the Muslim-majority areas). Nobody likes the division of India and my heart is heavy. But the choice is between one division and many divisions. We must face facts, cannot give in to emotionalism and sentimentality. The WorCom has not acted out of fear. But I am afraid that all our toil and hard work of these many years might go waste and prove unfruitful. My nine months in office have completely disillusioned me regarding the supposed merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Except for a few honorable exceptions, Muslim officials from top to bottom are working for the League. The communal veto given to the League in the mission plan would have blocked India's progress at every stage. Whether or not we like it, de facto Pakistan already exists in Punjab and Bengal. Under the circumstances I would prefer a de jure Pakistan which may make the League more responsible. Freedom is coming. We have 75 to 80 % of India, which we can make strong with our genius. The League can develop the rest of the country".

Neither Ghaffar nor Badshah Khan of N.W.F.P. attended the meeting. In the 1946 elections, which the League had fought on the issue of Pakistan, the League had won 17 out of the 38 Muslim seats. But in the charged climate of mid-1947, a referendum could

produce only one result. Yet Mountbatten convinced Nehru in the third week of April to accept the principle of a referendum. Clear on his priorities - obtaining control of 75 to 80 % of India, SP had concluded that NW.F.P. had to be written off. Held in July, the referendum produced 289244 votes for Pakistan and 2874 for India.

Princely States

On June 27, 1947 a communiqué announced that SP would head a new department called Department of States and V P Menon was the department's secretary. While Nehru was involved it was SP's baby from October 1946. Said G to SP "The problem of the states is so difficult that you only can solve it". Mountbatten recorded his relief that "Patel essentially a realist and very sensible" and not Nehru was to be a States Member.

As Menon would acknowledge later he was given both respect and discretion. "Having selected his men, SP trusted them entirely to implement his policy. Sardar never assumed that he knew everything and he never adopted a policy without full and frank consultation. Whenever we entered into discussion, we did do as personal friends rather than as Minister and Secretary.

With the transfer of power, the Raj announced that the special relationship with the Princes would come to an end. The void would have to be filled either by the States entering into a special relationship with the successor govt or govts or failing this into political arrangements with them. Jaipur, Rewa, Cochin, Jodhpur, Bikanner, Patiala and Baroda had expressed a desire to be part of the Constituent Assembly on April 28. Travancore and Hyderabad announced that they would be independent. Alerted to Nizam's bid for sway over Bastar, SP even before he assumed charge of the Homes dept squashed Conrad Corfield's (Viceroys Chief guide on States) desire to help the Nizam. The Nawab of Bhopal was wanting to be independent or join Pakistan.

K M Munshi was not alone in believing that Jinnah had given his blessings to an attempt to project Pakistan right across India through the states of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Baroda and Bhopal. Jinnah had handed over the ruler of Jodhpur, Hanwant Singh a blank sheet of paper all the concessions that he wanted".

The wooing of princes began in early May. Evidence of his exertions in the first half of May knocks down a story that Mountbatten would later float. "The first time he debated the states problem with SP, SP told him he need not bother because after the transfer of power the States people would rise, depose their rulers and throw their lot with the Congress".

As the story goes, Mounbatten persuaded SP to give up confrontation for compromise under which the rulers would hand over defence, external affairs and communications to India in exchange for which, the Congress would guarantee the ruler's titles, privileges and personal property. Mountbatten was seeking credit when there was none. Menon claimed that the scheme was his, he discussed with SP first who was inclined to agree. After securing Nehru's agreement, Menon got the Viceroy to agree too.

Mountbatten's story is only his peg for hanging a trophy that belongs to Menon. SP had got involved in the states much before Mountbatten did on June 3. It suited SP who would describe it to the Viceroy as "your offer". Menon on his part shrewdly suggested to Mountbatten that the wounds of partition might to some extent be healed if the Viceroy sold the scheme to the rulers and thereby enlarged the Dominion of India. The Viceroy was touched with this gesture. Menon may well have persuaded the Viceroy to own the formula and sell it to the princes as his. The accession team consisted of Nehru, Menon, Mountbatten and SP. Although Patel was the captain of the ship, each member was indispensable to its success.

On July 5, SP said to the princes - "We ask no more of the States than accession on these three subjects in which the common interests of the country are involved. In other areas we would scrupulously respect their autonomous existence. I invite my friends the rulers of States and their people to the councils of the Constituent Assembly in this spirit of friendliness". He also informed the princes that the Govts terms would be stiffer after August 15 and that there would be a limit to his capacity to restrain foes of the princes.

Courtship continued. On July 10 a number of rulers were invited to 1 Aurangzeb Road. About a fortnight later, Mountbatten

played his role to perfection. Facing the state rulers in full uniform he addressed them without notes. "The Indian Independence Act releases the states on 15/8/47 from all their obligations to the Crown. The states have complete freedom. But there has grown up during the period of British rule a system, which meant that the subcontinent of India acted as an economic entity. That link is now to be broken. If nothing can be put in place, only chaos can result and that will hurt the states first. The States are theoretically free to link their future with whichever Dominion they may care. But I may point out that there are certain geographical compulsions, which cannot be evaded. The vast majority of the states are linked geographically with the Dominion of India. I am sure that these three subjects have got to be handled by you for a larger organization. The draft Instrument of Accession provides that the states can accede on three subjects only (and) without financial liability. Further the Instrument of Accession contains an explicit provision that in no other matter has the Central Govt any other authority. But I must make it clear that I have to still persuade the Govt of India to accept it. If all of you would cooperate with me and are ready to accede, I am confident that I can succeed in my efforts. Remember that the day of transfer of power is very close and if you are prepared to come in, you must do so before 15TH August".

A few days earlier Jinnah had shocked Mountbatten that he was not needed as Pakistan's first Governor General. (India had asked him to stay on). This may have wounded the Viceroy and augmented the zeal with which he spoke that eventful day. By requesting Mountbatten to stay on Nehru and SP has secured his salesmanship for accession. When Yeshwant Rao Holkar of Indore attacked the instrument of accession, with a straight face Mountbatten claimed that he had drafted the Instrument of Accession although it was admitted by him earlier that V.P. Menon had drafted it.

While Gwalior was the first state to announce accession, Baroda was the first to sign it. The greatest share of credit goes to Yadavindra Singh of Patiala and Sadul Singh of Bikaner. Thus the three great strands of Indian history-Maratha, Rajput and Sikh came together. By about August 15, quoting Hobson "apart from

the few states clearly destined to adhere to Pakistan, every one both great and small bar only three had signed Instruments of Accession- a very small basketful of apples, though two of the missing states were very large apples indeed". Bhopal, Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad ! In Menon's view, Vallabhai's masterly handling of the princes was the foremost factor in the success of the accession policy.

The Nawab of Bhopal asked for an extension of the 15th August deadline but SP was unwilling. In view of his friendship with Mountbatten SP agreed to a special arrangement. "The Nawab would sign and deliver to Mountbatten the Instrument of Accession before the midnight of 14th August and the Viceroy would lock it up in his private case, not deliver it to the States dept until 25/8/ or unless the Nawab authorizes him to deliver earlier". The device enabled the Nawab to claim and the Sardar to deny that he had received an extension.

From the end of June 1947 to SP's death Menon saw SP atleast twice a day. Another person H M Patel represented India on the two man Steering Committee charged with settling the mechanics of partition. HM Patel's views on SP "After referring to the farsightedness, generosity and breadth of mind that the Sardar displayed in the Partition Council and recalling that he made himself available for consultation at all hours he said - With an almost unerring instinct he knew precisely what the right course was, and it can be said that we have gone wrong only where have somehow succeeded in persuading him against his own instinctive view". "You saw his face" Kriplani would say later of Patel "It grew year by year in power and determination".

In a fortnight before freedom he along with Nehru chose India's Cabinet Ministers and Governors. The line up gave Sardar great influence but he knew that Nehru was a darling of the people in a way he could never be. This realization produced the Nehru-Patel duumvirate that would administer India from independence until Sardar's death. In the selection of Ambedkar and Mookerjee, Patel's was undoubtfully a decisive role. The latter had secured Sardar's favor by demanding Bengal's partition in March 47 and by refusing to join an abortive bid for a united and independent Bengal that Sarat Bose and Suhrawady made in

April and May 1947. In Punjab, 1200 Muslims and 3,800 Sikhs had been killed since March 4 when rioting began. The worst carnage in March at Rawalpindi with Sikhs being the main victims. Riots spread. Patel accused the Raj of shrinking. A decision was deliberately taken to withdraw British troops from active service and repatriate them before the transfer of power. From August 1 a newly created Punjab Boundary Force was placed along the border to be delineated by Radcliffe only around 15/8/. Close home Gurgaon burned. Its deputy commissioner put several Hindu advocates in prison as hostages for men whose pleas for bail they had sponsored. Patel the Hindu seethed. SP confronted the Commissioner who admitted his guilt but the damage had been done.

97 % of the quarter million living in Chittagong were non-Muslim tribesmen yet Radcliffe awarded the areas to East Bengal. The League resented Radcliffe's decisions for the districts of Gurdaspur and Ferozepur.

On the evening of August 14, at the Constituent Assembly, Nehru made his memorable Tryst with Destiny address. Other spoke too. All that SP did was to join the other members, at the midnight hour, in a pledge of service. No one man had played a greater role in the arrival of this hour but all that he made was a simple pledge.

1947 - 1948

Recognizing the bitter reality about riots, deaths in Punjab, SP had on Aug 16 told Nehru, Mountbatten and Liaqat Ali "the only solution to the Punjab award was transfer of population on a large scale". None took up SP's suggestion. 25 days later, after thousand more deaths, the Govt of India decided that priority should be given to the transfer of refugees rather than maintenance of law and order. A month later India and Pakistan formally agreed that East and West Punjab would exchange their minorities.

SP's was a Hindu heart. He was roused more by a report of 50 Hindus, Sikhs dead rather than 50 Muslim deaths. Yet, he punished Hindu-Sikh offenders out of a sense of duty. Yet, while SP's frank tongue revealed his Hinduness, many failed to see his effort to enforce law or his anxiety to save Muslim lives. His

opponents exchanged notes while Nehru was in Pakistan. If Nehru's was the voice of charity; SP's was of reality. Each was right, each was incomplete.

Gandhi, meanwhile was sharing roof with Suhrawardy in one of Calcutta's riot prone localities. SP rebuked him for living in a ruffian's den and for choosing such company. Yet Calcutta was peaceful till the end of August only. Eruption of violence provoked a fast by G on Sept 2. Peace returned on Sept 5. G broke his fast with a glass of juice given by Suhrawardy.

Next was Delhi's turn to riot. After a few days of rioting tough action by SP brought the situation under control by mid Sept. Realizing Mountbatten's experience of wartime emergencies, SP and Nehru asked him to head a Central Emergency Committee. Good work was done. While SP visited the Dargah of Nizamuddin Chishti to take care of Muslim anxiety he was not going to tolerate Muslim misbehavior. Shots from a building under Muslim control whizzed past him on Sept 13 when he stopped outside the Faiz Bazar police station. Told by a police officer that it was impossible to silence the snipers without blowing it up, he said "Blow it up".

When the Sikhs intended to attack Muslim convoys on their way to Pakistan, he told them "I think it is in keeping with your dignity, reputations for valor and self-respect that you should raise a volunteer force which will protect these refugees. Break the vicious circle of attacks and retaliation for atleast a week. If the Pakistanis do not respond satisfactorily, India would take them to task". On his way to the airport he addressed an angry crowd of 1 to 1.5 lakhs and made one of the greatest speeches of his life " Pledge the safety of Muslim refugees crossing the city. Any obstacles will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are already performing the feats of endurance. If we have to fight, we must fight clean. Such a fight must wait an appropriate time and conditions and you must be watchful in choosing the ground". The rest of the speech is too long to reproduce here.

The message went home. His speeches marked a turning point in Punjab's story. Taxed by G with a report that he was encouraging Muslims to go away to Pakistan, SP told G that Muslims not loyal to India must leave, and he could not help adding that he suspected a majority of disloyalty. When the Cabinet

considered the question of houses vacated by Muslims in predominantly Muslim localities the majority agreed that the houses must first be offered to Muslims who had fled from other places but wished to remain in India. Believing that incoming Hindu Sikh refugees had an equal right to accommodation, SP opposed the plan while Nehru/Azad backed it. Nehru wanted Delhi's Sikh Deputy Commissioner transferred because the Muslims did not trust him. SP did not relent under the pressure.

On October 31, 1947 or thereabouts, G asked the Govt to declare that mosques would be protected, forcible conversion to Hinduism and Sikhism not recognized and no Muslim would be thrown out of India or his house. SP ignored G's advice.

Princely States

On Mountbatten's urging he had given Hyderabad three months extension for deciding on the accession. Visiting Kashmir between 18 and 23/6/47 Mountbatten had told Maharaja Singh "that if Kashmir joined Pakistan this would not be considered an unfriendly act by the Govt of India". According to Menon, Mountbatten said, "he had a firm assurance from Patel himself". Note that the Viceroy was quoting Patel and not Nehru. It was land of Nehru's forbears, an apple he did not want to loose. Nehru's friendship was intensified by his friendship with Sheikh Abdullah. Noting Abdullah's pro-Indian sentiment, G prayed that Kashmir would disprove the 2 nation theory. SP did not share G or Nehru's enthusiasm for Kashmir, was content leaving the decision to the ruler. Visiting Kashmir in August G had said that it was free to join either Dominion but in accordance with the will of the people. The Hindu king was unable to decide whom to join, India or Pakistan. He had executed a Standstill agreement with Pakistan and wanted to have a similar link with India but its leaders had not responded.

The ruler of Junagarh, a Muslim would probably, have joined India but for his new Dewan, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, a Muslim league politician. On Aug 15, Junnagarh announced its decision to accede to Pakistan. The Govt of India was uncomfortable. If Junagarh could accede what prevented Hyderabad from following suit. If India argued that not Junagarh's ruler but its people should

choose, Jinnah would make sure the same logic is used in Kashmir where the poll would be an Islam in danger one.

This implication was clear, yet on Sept 30 Nehru told Liaqat in Mountbatten's presence that while India objected to the Nawab's accession, it would always be willing to abide by the verdict of a plebiscite, referendum, election in Junagarh. Mountbatten played his role by adding that if need arose Nehru would apply the same principle to other States too, whereupon, in Mountbattens words "Nehru nodded his head sadly. Mr Laiqat eyes sparkled. There is no doubt that both of them were thinking of Kashmir".

Junagarh Won - SP made it clear that a plebiscite in Kashmir would be conditional on one in Hyderabad. Not prepared for the latter, Jinnah offered no plebiscite in Junagarh. On Sept 19, SP sent Menon to Junagarh who found the Nawab and Bhutto evasive. On Sept 24, at Patel's instance, a brigade consisting of Indian troops and solders from some of the Kathiiwad states were positioned near Junagarh's frontiers.

On Sept 25, residents of Junagarh gathered in Mumbai and formed with Sardar's knowledge a provisional govt. Four weeks of waiting followed. Patel was giving time to Pakistan to annul the accession or arrange a plebiscite. On October 21, the Cabinet authorized the take over of Junagarh's three feudatories. Mountbatten tried to argue against the decision, also wanted the Central Reserve Force to be used instead of the army. But SP was opposed to any qualms. Three feudatories of Junagarh were taken over by Nov 1. The Nawab fled to Karachi. Bhutto asked the Govt of India to take over the reins of the state. Prodded by Mounbatten, Nehru and Menon drafted a conciliatory telegram to Pakistan that the GOI was acceding to Bhuto's request but would ascertain the wishes of the people before accepting the State de jure.

Woken up past midnight by Menon Sardar objected to the offer of plebiscite. It was "unnecessary and uncalled for" he said. In his view, Nehru and Menon "were sissies to want to send any telegram at all". However after a good deal of persuasion, Patel agreed that a message might go, "subject to the omission of anything that could possibly be interpreted as friendly". The army entered on Nov 9, disarmed the state's soldiers and the reins taken over. Arriving in Junagarh four days later, addressing a large gathering,

Patel said "If Hyderabad does not see the writing on the wall, it goes the way Junagarh has gone. Pakistan attempted to set off Kashmir against Junagarh. When we raised the question of settlement in a democratic way, they at once told us that they would consider it if we applied that policy to Kashmir. Our reply was that we would agree to Kashmir if they agreed to Hyderabad". A referendum was held on February 20, 1948. A total of 130 votes were cast in favor of Pakistan out of 232891 registered voters.

Somanth - after the Junagarh rally, SP visited Somnath. Distressed to see it in ruins, Gadgil suggested that the temple be renovated. Thanks to donations without a rupee of government money the temple was renovated. By the time it was renovated SP was no more. Dr Rajender Prasad inaugurated it much against the wishes of Nehru.

Kashmir - The Maharaja had executed a Standstill agreement with Pakistan and wanted to have a similar link with India but its leaders had not responded. The Agreement had given Pakistan a strong foothold in Kashmir and placed the Postal and Telegraph services under her control. There was one stumbling block, however. Sheikh Abdullah was at loggerheads with Jinnah. Thus Jinnah decided to adopt a policy of coercion and force. Pakistan cut off supply of food, petrol and other commodities. Military pressure was applied through border raids.

SP's lukewarmness about Kashmir lasted till the day Pakistan had accepted Junagarh's accession. A series of steps were undertaken. At Patel's initiative, planes were diverted to the Delhi-Srinagar route, wireless - telegraph equipment were installed between Amritsar and Jammu. Patel wrote to Hari Singh (king of Kashmir) on 21.9.47 "Justice Meher Chand will convey to you personally the gist of our conversation on all matters affecting the interests of Kashmir. I have promised him full support and cooperation on our behalf". SP had virtually ordered the Maharaja to appoint Meher Chand as his PM. SP also got Guruji Golwalkar to fly to Srinagar on Oct 17.

Guruji brought home to the Maharaja the futility of an independent Kashmir. Pakistan would never tolerate it and engineer a revolt. He also assured him that SP would look after

Kashmiri people. After the Maharaja expressed his readiness to sign the Instrument of Accession, Guruji left for Delhi on Oct 19 and told SP of what had transpired.

On 15/10/47, the J and K PM had complained about lack of supplies, border raids to the British PM. Silence! On 18/10/47, the J & K State sent a protest to Jinnah on the same issue. Jinnah replied on 20/10/ taking offense against the language and attributed disruption in supplies to disturbances in East Punjab.

Sheikh Abdullah was released on 29/9/47. SP disliked him but Nehru was enthusiastic about him. The Maharaja had arrested Nehru in June 1946 when he fought for the Sheikh and so disliked him. Both SP and Nehru were aware that an understanding between the Maharaja and Sheikh were crucial to the state's relationship with India. In the last week of Sept Nehru had received reports that the Pakis were making preparations to enter Kashmir in large numbers. According to Nehru, the solution was to bring about the accession of Kashmir ASAP with the cooperation of Abdullah. SP could not refute Nehru's reasoning. On October 21, SP wrote to PM Mahajan that since the Sheikh was genuinely anxious to cooperate in dealing with external dangers, he urged powersharing between the Maharaja and Abdullah without in any way jeopardizing the Maharaja's position.

Before Mahajan received the letter, on Oct 22, 5000-armed tribesmen from Pakistan entered Kashmir. They burnt down Muzaffarbad. The Muslims of his battalion shot down Lt Col Narain Singh, in command of the state forces there. Brig Rajinder Singh, Chief of Staff of the States Forces, engaged the raiders for two days at Uri. The Brigadier and his team were killed but precious time had been gained. On Oct 23, Mahajan wrote to the Sardar that nearly the whole of our Muslim military and police had deserted or refused to cooperate. On Oct 24, the raiders captured the powerhouse at Mahura and switched off Srinagar's electricity. By the night of 24th they were close to Baramulla, only forty miles from the capital.

The Chief Minister of N.W.F.P. encouraged tribesmen to go to Kashmir while the Pakistani General Akbar Khan openly acknowledged his own, country's involvement. Jinnah told Mounbatten on Nov 1 that if his conditions were satisfied the

whole thing would be called off. Gen Akbar was leading the forces who was assisted by some Muslim ex-officers of Subhas Bose's Indian National Army. The British commander of the Gilgit Scouts, Major Brown, rebelled against the Kashmir govt and handed over Gilgit to Pakistan. Virtually all the Muslims in Hari Singh's forces crossed to the raiders.

When the Defence Committee of the Indian Cabinet met on Oct 25, SP supported helping the Maharaja while Nehru's first reaction was "The Maharaja must associate Abdullah with the resistance". A crucial meeting on Oct 26 was held at Nehru's house where Abdullah and Mahajan pleaded that Indian soldiers were urgently needed. Mountbatten's attitude and Nehru's own attitude made him hesitate whereupon Mahajan said that Kashmir would seek Jinnah's help if India did not respond. Nehru reacted by asking Mahajan to go away. SP stopped him "Ofcourse Mahajan", he said, "you are not going to Pakistan. Menon was now asked to return to Kashmir and tell the Maharaja that the Indian army was on its way.

Mountbatten got SP and Nehru to agree to two points, one that the Instrument of Accession should be secured before the troops were dispatched. The other that an offer of a plebiscite must be included in the Instrument of Accession once law and order is restored. SP agreed to Nehru's condition that Abdullah should have a place of authority in Kashmir. India needed Brit and Abdullah's support at that crucial juncture.

On October 26, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession in Jammu and asked in writing for military help and agreed to install Abdullah at once as Head of Administration alongside the de jure Premier Mahajan. It may be noted that the Instrument of Accession does not include any promise or offer of a plebiscite.

By early October 27, over a hundred planes had been assembled. 329 men of the Sikh Regiment's 1ST Battalion were in Srinagar before dusk. However, the airport was snowbound and unserviceable. Now the RSS Swayamsevaks cleared the snow in time for the Indian planes to land. Action started. SP made his first visit to Srinagar around Nov 3. Said Abdullah "events took a decisive turn after Patel's visit. The Sardar did not loose even

one minute. He studied the situation and said that the enemy must be driven back." In the last week of October 47, SP said that a 65 mile road between Jammu and Pathankot was to be ready with eight months. Refusing to listen to excuses he said, "You have to do it". It was done in time.

The Hari Singh-Abdullah formula to let the Abdullah run the valley and leave Jammu to the Maharaj did not work with the Sheikh interfering in Jammu. SP flew into to Jammu on Dec 2 and tried to broker peace between the two but failed. Abdullah wanted to be Premier for the complete state. Wrote Nehru to the Maharaja "Sheikh should be the PM and should be asked to form the govt. Mr Mahajan can be one of the ministers and formally preside over the cabinet. You could be its constitutional head".

With this letter Nehru took over the shaping of India's Kashmir policy a role so far played by SP. Viewing Abdullah as the key to Kashmir's future and believing that SP would mishandle him, Nehru decided to manage Kashmir himself. To assist in Kashmir, he brought into the cabinet as Minister without portfolio, N G Ayyangar, a former Dewan of the state and constitutional expert. Unaware of Nehru's plans whose lack of frankness with the Sardar created a rift between him and Ayyangar. Nehru and SP exchanged a series of letters in which SP offered his resignation to which Nehru wrote "If I am to continue as PM, I cannot have my freedom restricted and I must have a certain liberty of direction".

Within days of the attack on Kashmir, Mountbatten had urged Nehru to visit Lahore and talk to Jinnah, Liaqat. SP had protested. Nehru did not go, though illness was as much a reason as Patel's opposition. Nehru had agreed, on Mountbatten's persuasion, to refer the matter to the United Nations. On Nov 21, Nehru reiterated his offer of plebiscite under the auspices of the U.N. SP opposed it but Kashmir was Nehru's baby now. Nehru obtained G's reluctant consent but not before G had altered the wording of India's complaint to the UN. A reference to an independent Kashmir as a possible alternative to accession to either India or Pakistan was removed.

With the Indian Army finding that the only way the raiders could be completely removed from Kashmir was by attacking the bases and sources of supply in Pakistan, India warned Pakistan

on 22/12/47 that unless Pakistan denied assistance and a base to the invaders, India would be compelled to take such action. Mountbatten urged Nehru "the overwhelming need for caution and constraint", he stressed "how an embroilment with Pakistan would undermine the whole of Nehru's foreign policy and progressive social aspirations". Nehru lodged a complaint with the United Nations on 31/12/1947. He had earlier made a promise for plebiscite in his All India Radio broadcast on 23/12/47.

Patel's misgivings were fulfilled when, guided by the British delegate, the Security Council seemed to imply that Pakistan's case was stronger than India. Ayyangar and Abdullah were outperformed by Pakistan's Zafrullah Khan in the UN. On 13/8/48, the UN passed a resolution whereby a plebiscite would be held under UN auspices after Pakistan withdrew its troops from the state.

Hyderabad - A Standstill Agreement was signed on Nov 29 along with a secret letter to Mountbatten that the Nizam would not accede to Pakistan. The agreement provided for each party to post an Agent General at each other's headquarters. SP appointed a trusted person K M Munshi after which SP preferred to wait since Mountbatten was interfering in the Hyderabad matter to help his old friend, the Nizam. SP waited since he knew that Mountbatten was to leave in the summer of 1948.

Through a series of carrot, tick approaches SP, ably helped by Menon, got the rulers of Orissa to form a larger state. Said Menon to the rulers of Patna, Kalahandi and Baudh "The GOI are most anxious to maintain law and order. We cannot allow your state to create problems for the Govt of Orissa and if you had not signed the agreement, we would have been compelled to take over the administration of the State".

SP met 14 rulers of the state of Chhatisgarh in Nagpur on Dec 15. He promised them that privy purses would be included in the Constitution, a promise he fulfilled but Indira Gandhi had different plans. In Kathiawad. Patels's tactics were different. One he got G's blessings. Two he did not join the negotiations himself. Said Menon "It is not possible for 222 states to continue their separate existence for much longer.

The extinction of a separate existence may not be palatable but unless something is done to stabilize the situation in good time, the march of events may bring about still more unpalatable results". On Jan 22, 48, 22 of Kathiawar's major rulers signed a covenant for union.

By the middle of Feb 48, SP and Menon had presented two schemes, one where States merged into provinces and the other where they joined one another to form a Union. So Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Matsya, PEPSU (Patiala and the eastern Punjab states union) came into being with Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces etc. So was formed a new and unified India.

Around this time SP was expecting to leave the govt. Nehru, Azad wanted the Sikh Randhawa transferred but SP had refused. G realized that Delhi's Hindus and Sikhs would be upset with the transfer but found it difficult to tell Delhi's Muslims that there was a limit to the sympathy they must expect. G told Patel on Dec 29 or 30 "Either you should run things or Nehru should". Patel said "I do not have the physical strength. Let him run the show. I will assist him to the extent possible from outside". G kept quiet. Later Nehru sent Ayyangar to Ajmer (riots) to convey the PM's regrets but the Commissioner Prasad perceived it as interference, more so by SP. If only Nehru had told SP about the visit, this misunderstanding could have been avoided.

He had written his resignation letter on Dec 23. Since then, he toured extensively as if he was bidding his friend's farewell. At Calcutta he made two points. Said he "I have been accused of being a friend of the Rajas, capitalists, zamindars. But I claim to be a friend of Labour and the poor. I have resolved not to have property and have none. But I cannot succumb to the prevalent fashion to pose as a leader or attempt to gain leadership by abusing princess and capitalists".

The other point was on Pakistan's share of the assets of undivided India. The two countries had in Nov agreed that Rs 55 crs remained to be transferred to Pakistan. Within two hours of the agreement India informed Pakistan - on Patel's insistence-that implementation would hinge on a settlement on Kashmir. Said SP "In the division of assets we treated Pakistan generously.

But we cannot tolerate even a pie being spent for making bullets to be shot at us. The settlement of assets is like a consent decree. The decree will be executed when all the o/s points are satisfactorily settled".

In Lucknow he said "The Muslim League used to call Gandhi as their enemy number one. Now they have substituted me in his place, for I speak the truth. They believed that if they had Pakistan they would ensure full protection to Muslims. But have they ever sympathized with Muslims in India" To the Indian Muslims I have only one? Why did you not open your mouths on the Kashmir issue? Why did you not condemn the acts of Pakistan? It is your duty to sail in the same boat and sink or swim together. I want to tell you very frankly that you cannot ride two horses. Select one horse. Those who want to go to Pakistan can go there and live in peace. I appeal to Hindu Mahasabhaites to join the Congress. If you think you are the only custodians of Hinduism, you are mistaken. Hinduism preaches a broader outlook; I appeal to the RSS not to be rash and tactless. Do not be aggressive".

After the Cabinet had backed SP on not giving Pakistan Rs 55 crs, Patel made the same known through a press conference on Jan 12. Prodded by Azad about the conditions of Muslims, G went on an indefinite fast on Jan 12. When SP rushed to meet G, he conveyed to Patel that non-payment of Rs 55 crs seemed immoral. Who says so asked Patel. "Mountbatten" replied G. Apparently G had met Mounbatten last evening and asked what he thought of the decision to withhold Rs 55 crs.

Mounbatten said that it would be "unstatesmanlike and unwise" and be India's "first dishonorable act". When SP met Mountbatten and protested he agreed to withdraw the word dishonorable only. SP next G if he had spoken to Nehru. G had just spoken to Nehru who said "Yes, it was passed but we don't have a case. It is legal quibbling".

On Jan 14, the cabinet reversed the earlier decision. Earlier in the day, tears ran down G's face. The Sardar, as he would later admit, uttered extremely bitter words. SP supported the cabinet decision and left for Bhavnagar the next morning for a bid for a united Kathiawad - his gift for G. But the fast was not withdrawn. SP had thought that the fast was directed at him since the Muslims

had complained to him against the Home Ministry, particularly SP. G's defence produced mixed emotions in SP. However, Patel could not resist the feeling, that, irrespective of its origins, the fast was clipping his wings and strengthening Nehru's.

Meanwhile Azad and Prasad spent hours-collecting pledges from Delhi's citizens. Representatives of the Sikhs, Hindus, RSS, Hindu Mahasabha joined others in assuring G that mosques occupied by non-Muslims would be vacated, areas set apart for Muslims would not be forcibly occupied and Muslims choosing to return to Delhi could do so. At 12.45 pm on Jan 17, G broke his fast.

After the first attack on G's life on Jan 20, SP asked G for permission to search everyone coming to meet G or to join the prayer meeting. G refused to give it. At 4 p.m. on January 30, G and SP began their heart to heart to talk at Birla House. G said that Nehru and Patel were indispensable. After about 40 minutes, the two of them and Nehru agreed to meet the next day. As SP entered his house, he got the news that G had been shot dead. SP shown iron courage gave solace to one and all, instructed the police chiefs to impose strict security measures all over the country and not hesitate to say that the assassin was a Hindu. That day Nehru and SP embraced each other, forgetting their differences.

A public outcry demanded SP 's resignation. (Probably motivated). SP was all set to send his resignation but was convinced by his aid Vidya Shankar to hold it back. Nehru wrote a lovely letter to SP to which he reciprocated with equally warm sentiments. Addressing the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly, for the first time he accepted Nehru as his leader.

The RSS was banned in February. Nehru thought it was fascistic while SP believed it to be a misguided patriotic. They disagreed period. SP had to be hospitalized soon thereafter after which he spent four months recovering in Delhi, Dehradun and Mussorie. During this period, Menon reported daily on state merger and to take instructions.

Meanwhile Kriplani's term as President of the Congress was to expire. With Mountbatten's departure, Nehru and SP agreed that Rajagopalachari would replace him. On Mountbatten's advice

Nehru shifted residence from his York House (next to SP's house) to Teen Murthi House. It had the effect of increasing the distance between the two stalwarts because no longer could Nehru drop into 1 Aurangzeb Road frequently.

Hyderabad - Roy Bucher, the army chief visited SP at Dehra Dun. SP was willing to accept a partition of Kashmir conditional to Hyderabad coming to terms with India. Bucher would later on observe that "the Sardar's reading of the pulse of India was almost uncanny in its accuracy". The proposal was supposed to be discussed during Liaqat Ali's visit to Delhi but due to an illness he did not come nor had any agreement been reached between India and Hyderabad.

The Nizam of Hyderabad was under the influence of Kasim Razvi who headed an organization that was dedicated to maintaining Muslim supremacy in the State. On his advice the Nizam replaced his Premier with Mir Laik Ali, a prominent Hyderabadi businessmen who had been on Pakistan's delegation to the UN. Razvi visited Delhi in November, called on the Sardar and told him "We shall fight and die to the last man". SP replied "How can I stop you from committing suicide". Despite this the Standstill Agreement was signed. At the end of Jan Sardar told Laik Ali that India would restrain herself if Hyderabad gave Hindus say in the govt i.e. either accede or introduce a representative govt. To the Nizam both the options were equally were unattractive. They arranged for a secret loan of Rs 20 crs to Pakistan. The Razakars were financed and armed. On the other hand, the Indian Army was withdrawn in terms of the standstill agreement.

Razvi made highly inflammatory speeches, which were denied by the Brit representative in Hyderabad. On April 15/48, SP met Laik Ali and told him "You know as well as I do where power in Hyderabad lies. The gentlemen who dominates Hyderabad, Razvi, has categorically stated that if the Indian Dominion comes to Hyderabad, it will find nothing but the ashes and bones of one and a half crore Hindus. If that is the position, then it seriously undermines the whole future of the Nizam and his dynasty".

Laik Ali was taken aback by Sardar's words. This was not the language he had heard from either Nehru or Mountbatten. The

Indian govt. made four demands, which the Nizam refused to act upon instead, he sent Laik Ali to Delhi. Menon stated that all that he could do was to draft Heads of Agreement in order to focus the points of discussion. The draft kept on moving to and fro for four weeks till SP wrote to Nehru and Mountbatten that they were wasting time.

Mountbatten was keen on a Hyderabad settlement before he left. When he went to say farewell to SP he gave Patel the new heads of agreement to which he said "I will never initial it". After lunch Sardar was in an emotional mood when he said, "How can we prove our love and gratitude to you". Mountbatten said "If you are sincere, sign this document". Patel initialed the draft and embraced Mountbatten with tears. This is an account given by Mountbatten and could contain some mirch masala in it. Nevertheless Mountbatten was on cloud nine as if his dream were coming true.

The Heads of Agreement just initialed provided that the Nizam's govt would if requested by the GOI, pass legislation similar to that of India on any matter of defence, external affairs and communications, the Hyderabad army would be restricted to a maximum of 20,000 plus 8,000 irregulars and Hyderabad's foreign, trade relations would be conducted by India. Also the Nizam would declare a plebiscite, form a Constituent Assembly and install an Interim Govt.

Well luck was on SP's side. The Nizam had refused to sign and raised afresh set of points. SP was all for an economic blockade, he had persuaded the Cabinet in the middle of May to prepare for military action. Nehru had warned that it could hurt India's military position in Kashmir, the Chiefs of Armed Forces - all Brits had termed it as a hazardous military gamble. SP response was, excerpts "It is not the action of the Army which maintains law and order - look at Punjab last August, when 55,000 men could not stop the massacres. It is the prestige of the govt backed by potential armed action, which keeps the people in order. But if the Govt delays action in Hyderabad much longer, then its prestige will fall so greatly that no amount of troops will be sufficient for internal security". Persuaded, on May 13, a go ahead was given for military preparations. However, Mountbatten recorded "Nehru said at the

meeting and assured me privately, that he would not allow any orders to be given for operations to start unless there was a wholesale massacre of Hindus within the state, which would patently justify, in the eyes of the world, action by the GOI". The countdown began the day Mountbatten left i.e. July 5. The economic blockade was now official. Hyderabad played into his hands by hiring gunrunners who were taking off at nights from airports in Pakistan and touching down on landing strips in Bidar. Razakars and Communists seem to be forging closer links. A Hindu member of Nizam's council J V Joshi had resigned, charging the police and Razakars of terrorizing Hindus. Attacks on Indian villages near the border were reported as well as attacks on foreign missionaries and nuns.

Protesting the Nizam approached the UN and the U S President to arbitrate who refused. While SP wanted intervention, Nehru remembered his word to Mountbatten and tried to avoid it. Isolated Nehru yielded. Rajaji wrote to the Nizam asking to ban the Razakars and invited the Indian Army. Both the demands were rejected. At a meeting called by Rajaji, attended by Nehru, Patel and Menon it was decided to occupy Hyderabad. It was decided that the Army would cross over on 13/9/48.

On the night of 11/9/ Jinnah died in Karachi. On the night of 12/9/ Munshi called from Hyderabad to say that he was about to be interned by the Hyderabad govt. Even as action was about to start, telegrams continued. SP wanted a crisp reply to be sent to the Nizam but Rajaji disagreed with their draft. At his instance H M Patel and Menon called on Rajaji at 10 p.m. who argued with him till 1 p.m. They had fulfilled SP's purpose, which was to delay the despatch of Rajaji's telegram to Nizam and thus deny the Nizam a chance to change his mind before the troops crossed the border.

Operation Polo started on 13/9/, was over by the 17th. Now, the Nizam acceded to India, withdrew the complaint to the UN, welcomed representative rule and surrendered his vast holdings of land.

SP's work of unifying India was thus complete. The climax of Patel's striving, the Nizam's defeat was the culmination of the process of history that brought Muslim rule over a Hindu majority

to end. We see a touch of pride in his encounter with the Nizam: here Patel squares, on behalf of the Hindus, an ancient account with the Muslims. His arraigns and exposes a defeated adversary in front of others. He does so because he cannot entirely forget, in his moment of trump, past wrongs on Hindus. While ready to hurt, Patel was also ready to be friend.

1948 to 1950

SP's prestige was its peak. While being acting PM, he wrote letters to provincial Premiers on Berlin, Japan, China, Indonesia, Burma, UN and several internal problems. The letters dispose of the charge that he was an Indian isolationist. G's going removed the equality in his relationship with Nehru and made Nehru the Sardar's chief. Patel's heart attack and four months of rest underscored the new relationship. Inspite of Hyderabad, SP was aware of Nehru's primacy and popularity.

The left assailed him. While admitting SP's role in unifying India, Ashok Mehta, a socialist criticised his economic policies and capitalist friends. While SP rubbed shoulders with the rich, he was independent of them, led a simple life and sought no favor for himself or his family. Manibhen stayed in a one room apt till her last in the 1980s. SP was unlike the Leftists who took money from the capitalists and abused them. Mehta changed his views and said in 1980 "Looking back, perhaps, in those difficult years, 1946-7-8, he had a case. It was a question of India surviving or not surviving. I think we did not, atleast I failed to, take that fact into account".

Now SP urged discipline in the Congress and hard work in factories and farms. Nehru attacked capitalists, landlords and imperialists. Nehru's popularity surged with his appearances on the world stage. SP's words were less appealing in comparison. SP could have retired but he had promised G to stay at Nehru's side and national interest required it too. An occasional caller, J R D Tata, would retain the impact of SP's good sense and logic and contrast it with Nehru's mould of thought.

At the end of October 1948, Pattabhi was elected Congress President. Although it was known that SP preferred P Tandon, the election went off smoothly. Despite their divergent views, it

seemed that the big two began to realize each other's usefulness. Said Nehru "But for Sardar's affection and advice, I would not have been able to run the state".

When Sardars's plane to Jaipur had got lost there was tension. On his return to Palam, he entered the Parliament Chamber later that day to be cheered for three full minutes. But he had been moved. Said the Sardar of Bardoli in a broken voice "The demonstration of love and affection which I have seen today will have abiding place in my memory. The three or four hours which I spent on the riverbed were filled with thoughts of the anxiety caused to my countrymen". SP had gone to Jaipur to inaguarate the Greater Rajasthan Union that consisted of Kotah, Bundi, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Jaipur, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer amongst others.

While SP opposed the RSS' s ideology he was impressed by the discipline and conscious that it had saved numerous Hindu, Sikh lives during the 1947 killings.

Hindus leaving East Pakistan far exceeded Muslims entering it putting pressure on W Bengal's economy. As a third solution SP had said that if it did not stop, India would send out Muslims in equal numbers. As Sardar were to agree later it was a wrong thing to say. Dissatisfaction within the party on Nehru's approach to the influx problem had given SP a chance to strengthen himself against Nehru But he had rejected it.

Liaqat Ali came to India to resolve the problem. Nehru pressurized SP to meet him. SP said to Liaqat, "Jawarharlal is exerting day and night for Muslim rights. I lie awake at night worrying what happened to G might happen to him". When Liaqat proposed that both Bengalis must have ministers for minority affairs, SP opposed it.

But a pact was signed that SP supported. The two govts agreed to ensure equality of citizenship to Hindus and Muslims alike constitute minority commissions and place minority representatives in the govts of Bengal and Asaam. SP went to W Bengal and sold the agreement to the people there.

If SP controlled the party and services, Nehru enjoyed the confidence of the masses and intelligencia. Such was the

distribution of influence between 1947 and 1950. As chairman of the Advisory Committee on minorities, he completed the abolition of separate electorates.

After India became a Republic, the Governor General was to be replaced by a President. Nehru wanted Rajaji to be President. SP was willing but changed his mind for two reasons. One was the party's desire to make Prasad president. Most members of the Constituent Assembly could not forget the Quit India Movement when Prasad went to jail but Rajaji was proposing accommodation with the Raj and League. Yet despite his personal preference for Prasad, if approached properly, SP would have helped in getting Rajaji the job. Nehru's impatience and pride ruled out a solution, ably exploited by Shri S Sinha, the govts Chief Whip. He told Nehru that the talk among assembly members was that the PM would not be able to install Rajaji without SP's help. Hurt, Nehru wanted to prove that Rajaji could be elected on his own. He wrote to Prasad that he had discussed the matter with SP (when he had not) and they felt that the present arrangement must continue i.e. Rajaji must become president.

Prasad and Nehru both turned to SP who was in Mumbai. Note that Nehru had not aplogised to SP for using his name without speaking to him. Prasad' stand, the party's view and being taken for granted SP wrote to Nehru that the matter was complicated and needed to be handled tactfully and cautiously.

At the party MP's meeting, it seemed that Nehru was to loose but SP took charge and told Nehru that a decision would be taken after his return from London. That night Nehru informed SP through a handwritten note that he would resign if Rajaji was not made president. That Nehru did not talk of quitting five weeks after his return was expected but he still tried to get Prasad to step down. Rejecting Nehru's baits, Prasad stood firm forcing Rajaji to announce his retirement. SP told Rajaji "Nehru has spoilt everything. I wanted to do it tactfully. He has rushed into the matter". Unable to harbor any resentment against SP, Rajaji spoke of the universal confidence that SP commanded. The adroit SP had won and a rash Nehru had lost.

It was not east to get SP to comment on foreign affairs but he was clued in. On Tibet he wrote to Nehru on 4.6.49 "We have

strengthen our position in Sikkim and Tibet. The farther we keep away from the Communist forces the better. I anticipitate that as soon as the Communists have established themselves in the rest of China, they will try to destroy Tibet's autonomous existence. You have to consider carefully your policy towards Tibet in such circumstances and prepare from now for that eventuality.

Nehru ignored SP's views. Six months later the two differed on the timing of India's recognition of China's new govt. SP to Nehru excerpts "My own feeling is that we do not stand to gain anything by being in the lead (i.e. by recognizing China ahead of most other countries). In case you feel we must recognize China ahead of others, I feel we must have a discussion in the Cabinet". Nehru's reply "if we follow others, it would mean that we have no policy of our own, if we follow other countries".

North Korea invaded South K in June 1950. India supported the UN resolution calling for assistance of S Korea but SP found the foreign ministries expression of India's dislike of aggression unnecessarily apologetic. While Nehru strove to end the war in Korea and end mistrust between China and the U S, the Sardar focussed on China's moves in Tibet. In 1949, China had acquired a strong leadership making SP anxious.

When China invaded Tibet in 1950, India's response was an unsigned and unofficial note handed over to the Chinese Foreign Office expressing regret and surprise. Nehru India was more than willing to understand Russian and Chinese fears but SP was less understanding and accused of China of aggression / spoke of Tibet as a country in his utterances in Ahmedabad.

SP to Nehru on 7.11.50 excerpts "The Chinese govt have tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions. During this period of correspondence the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The tragedy is that the Tibetans put faith in us and we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese influence. Their actions indicate that even though we regard ourselves as friends of China the Chinese do not regard as their friends. The undefined state of the frontier have the elements of potential troubles between China and ourselves. For the first time after centuries, India's defence has to

concentrate on two fronts simultaneously". The letter ended with a suggestion that we meet early and decide. The meeting never took place.

Said the London Economist excerpts " If India decides to support the independence of Tibet as a buffer state between itself and China, Britain and the US will do well to extend formal diplomatic recognition to it". Non-embarrassment of China was the cornerstone of Nehru's policy.

Kashmir - On Nehru's request he asked the Maharaja of Kashmir to leave the state. His own opinions were suppressed when the Constituent Assembly considered Kashmir. Despite strong feelings among members, as acting PM, he agreed to a special status for Kashmir. Abdullah pressed for them backed by Azad and Ayyengar. The three seemed to represent Nehru's wishes and he did not want to repudiate Nehru in his absence. In private conversation he said "Jawarhlal royega". 4 yrs later Abdullah was dismissed/arrested.

Unhappy with Nehru's handling of Kashmir he never said how he would resolve it. To him Kashmir was Nehru's baby and he made no effort to pick it up.

Four times SP served as acting PM but never took advantage of Nehru's absence. He never wanted to topple Nehru but wanted to contain him.

The Congress President elections came up. Nehru wanted Kriplani while P Tandon of U.P. was the other candidate. Why had not SP strived for a consensus? An itch for a tussle and an instinctive grasp of Tandon's strength has influenced him but there were other factors as well. One was a feeling of being excluded, despite a membership of the Cabinet Foreign Affairs Committees, from consultations on foreign policy. Another was Nehru's increased critical interest in the functioning of the Home and States Ministries. Realizing the possibility of defeat Nehru wrote to SP that if Tandon won, he would neither function in the WorCom not continue as PM. SP offered to cooperate with Nehru but it was too late. Tandon won. SP asked Rajaji after the result "Have you brought Jawarhlal's resignation? SP was not expecting it, Nehru had changed his mind.

Said Kriplani in 1974 "The Sardar was the greatest administrator we had". Old, unwell, tired SP had lost nearly all the will to fight Nehru except on the issue of Kidwai's nomination to the Congress WorCom. Said SP to Rajaji in the middle of October 1950 "Till Bapu's death, I used to oppose and fight with him. Bur now I have given up". In view of G's last wish any open criticism would look bad. But he would not remain silent if he found Nehru causing irreparable harm to the country. An autocrat with an ego, SP said to Rajaji about Nehru.

He passed his last on Friday the 15th of December. Said Rajaji "What inspiration, courage, confidence and force incarnate Vallabhai was! We will not see the like of him again". Said Prasad "Sardar's body is being consumed by fire but no fire on earth can consume his fame. We grieve for ourselves not for him".

Said V P Menon "in the tasks that lie ahead, India would do well to remember the pregnant words of Sardar that "it will be a folly to ignore realities, facts take their revenge, if they are not faced squarely and well".

This essay is my Tribute to the Iron Man of India. If Swami Vivekananda expounded the greatness of the Indian Civilization, restored self-confidence in the Hindus of their culture, Sardar Patel unified India as none other. It is held as an axiomatic truth that India became an independent, sovereign state from 15 August 1947 when the British imperialists transferred power to Indian hands. Do facts bear out what is generally supposed to be true?

At the end of World War II India stood at the crossroads. One road led to genuine independence, the overthrow of colonial rule as well as its domestic props, transformation of Indian society, destruction of all the structural barriers - foreign and domestic - to her regeneration - all the barriers that inhibit her development. Genuine decolonization means that the old order of the colonial era must yield place to a new one - political, economic, social and military.

The other road led to formal transfer of power to classes that were traditional Indian allies of imperialism, continued integration into the capitalist-imperialist system and revolving around metropolitan powers as a satellite, continued existence of the

development-inhibiting structural barriers that colonial rule had created and consequent 'development of underdevelopment'.

At the end of World War II, British imperialism was beset with several contradictions -with U.S imperialism (on which it depended for its post-war reconstruction), international communism, national liberation struggles in colonies, its own armed forces who mutinied in some places to realize their demand for speedy demobilization, etc. Of all the contradictions with which British imperialism was confronted, its contradiction with the Indian people was no doubt the principal one.

TWO FORCES AT WORK

In India there were two forces at work, besides the Raj , at the end of the war. When the war in Europe ended, Viceroy Wavell released the members of the working committee of the Congress from prison and convened a conference at Simla in June-July 1945. As V.P Menon wrote, the Congress came in for co-operation without any conditions. The Congress leaders were eager to join the Viceroy's Executive Council (which Wavell intended to reconstitute with representatives of Indian political parties) "on the basis that they would whole-heartedly co-operate in supporting and carrying through the war against Japan to its victorious conclusion". (The Congress leaders', including Gandhi's, faith in the creed of non-violence was remarkably flexible.) Nehru felt overjoyed and said: "We feel we must succeed at Simla …I am very hopeful." But the Simla Conference foundered on the rock of the League's claim to nominate all Muslim members of the reconstituted Council.

Wavell wanted the Congress leaders to "see to it that a peaceful atmosphere is preserved in the country". Wavell was afraid of a post-war upheaval in the country. So was Gandhi. The Congress president Abul Kalam Azad wrote to the Viceroy:

> *"… the contacts established between the Congress and the Government had largely allayed past bitterness and marked the beginning of a new chapter of confidence and goodwill."*

As we shall see, it was that surge of "confidence and goodwill" for the British imperialists that continued to rise and yielded the

transfer of power. Congress leaders had reasons to feel "confidence and goodwill" for the British imperialists. Close co-operation between the Raj on the one hand and the Indian big bourgeoisie and Congress leaders on the other had already started. The Raj regularly invited discussions with Congress leaders on constitutional issues, the future administrative set-up, "a scheme of army reorganization" and other matters like education, industry and planning. Nehru was being consulted on constitutional questions and army reorganization. In June 1944 Sir Ardeshir Dalal, a Tata director and an author of the Bombay Plan, so much lauded by Nehru, had been appointed a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in charge of planning and development. During the war the British Raj and the Indian big bourgeoisie were bound with close ties of collaboration, for instance, in the Eastern Group Supply Council and on various official committees.

On the other hand, after the end of the war the people - workers, peasants, the youth, office employees, even sections of the Raj's regular armed forces and the police did not share the Congress leaders' "confidence and goodwill" for British imperialism and though not led and organized by any political party, rose throughout India to liberate themselves from imperialist fetters. Nehru appraised the revolutionary situation correctly and joined hands with the imperialists and tried by all means to dissipate the revolutionary situation. Nehru said that India was on the "Edge of a Volcano" and that "We are sitting on the top of a Volcano".5 P.J.Griffiths, the leader of the European group in the Central Legislative Assembly, also said: "India, in the opinion of many, was on the verge of revolution."

INDIA ON THE "VERGE OF REVOLUTION"

In the winter and summer months of 1945-6 India, as all sorts of reactionaries feared, was on the "edge of a volcano" - ready to erupt at any time - as Nehru said. Almost immediately after the end of the war, on 21 to 23 November 1945, Calcutta saw the first outburst of the pent-up fury of the people who had suffered incredibly under the fascist British Raj during the war. The immediate cause of it was the police firing on a procession of students demanding the release of the Indian National Army

(INA) officers who were then on trial. A student and another youth became martyrs and several were wounded. That set Calcutta and the suburbs ablaze. The city was completely paralyzed. Trains were stopped. Barricades were set up and street battles took place. All communal considerations were forgotten and the people fought with primitive weapons the heavily armed forces of the Raj. Police and military vehicles were burnt down - about 150 of them. According to official estimates, 33 persons including an American, were killed and 200 civilians, many policemen, 70 British and 37 American soldiers were wounded. The whole of Bengal was surcharged with bitter anti-imperialist feeling. Describing the mood of the people, Bengal Governor Casey wrote: "Both in North and South Calcutta a feature of the disturbances … was that the crowds when fired on largely stood their ground or at most only receded a little, to return again to the attack…. Throughout the forenoon and early afternoon of the 23rd [November], Congress and some Communist propaganda cars toured the affected areas dissuading the students from further participation."

Viceroy Wavell rushed to Calcutta. On 27 November he informed the Secretary of State: "Casey was impressed by the very strong anti-British feeling, behind the whole demonstration, and considered the whole situation still very explosive and dangerous." Significantly, Commander-in-Chief Auchinleck made an appreciation of the internal situation within India on 24 November, the very day after the uprising. The Viceroy agreed generally with the appreciation. Auchinleck wrote:

> *"If the Indian Forces as a whole cease to be reliable, the British Armed Forces now available are not likely to be able to control the internal situation or to protect essential communications, nor would any piecemeal reinforcement of these forces be of much avail. To regain control of the situation and to restore essential communications within the country nothing short of the organized campaign for the reconquest of India is likely to suffice."*

The lesson of the November uprising went home to the British imperialists. On 24 November itself, Auchinleck met some representatives of provincial governments about I.N.A trials. In

his letter to Wavell of the same day Auchinleck wrote that the provincial representatives agreed that "the trials should be limited to those involving brutality and murder of such a nature that it could not be defended as an act committed in good faith by a combatant". He added: "The evidence reaching us now increasingly goes to show that the general opinion in the Army … is in favour of leniency." On 30 November - within a week of the uprising - the Indian Government issued a press communiqué which stated: "Until all investigations are complete, it is not possible to state the number who will be brought to trial but the total is unlikely to be as many as fifty and may be as few as twenty, and, as explained above, trials will be limited to those against whom brutality is alleged." The charge of 'waging war against the king' was dropped and the sentences already passed were remitted.

It may be noted that in the meantime the British had brought home as captives tens of thousands of captured I.N.A officers and men and started court-martials of them. The original plan which had received the "gratified approval" of the Congress leaders had been to release some, sentence many others to imprisonment and execute 40 to 50 prisoners. As we have said, the plan was changed almost immediately after the November uprising.

As stories of Subhas Bose and the I.N.A, who had founded the provisional government of Free India in Southeast Asia and planted the flag of Indian freedom in Kohima, spread, they sent a thrill from one end of the subcontinent to another. As R.P. Dutt said, the example of the I.N.A and "the subsequent trials of the I.N.A leaders kindled to white heat the flame of militant patriotism and the conception of the armed conquest of power in place of the old non-violent struggle." The most alarming thing to the British imperialists was the impact of the I.N.A on the British Indian armed forces. Nehru wrote to Commander-in-Chief Claude Auchinleck: "Within a few weeks the story of the I.N.A had percolated to the remotest villages in India and everywhere there was admiration for them and apprehension as to their possible fate … The widespread popular enthusiasm was surprising enough, but even more surprising was a similar reaction of a very large number of regular Indian army officers and men. Something had touched them deeply."

On 26 November 1946, Auchinleck wrote to Wavell that "there is a growing feeling of sympathy [among the men of the British Indian armed forces] for the I.N.A." The loyalty of the British Indian armed forces was thoroughly shaken by the I.N.A; large numbers of them transferred their allegiance to their motherland.

Gandhi rushed to Calcutta immediately after the November uprising. He had a series of interviews with Governor Casey. He assured Casey that "our future long term relations would be good", that he would do his utmost in bringing about a peaceful solution of India's constitutional problem, and that he was lulling the people into the belief that "India was going to get her freedom out all right" and asking them to "work on that assumption and no other".16 The Congress working committee met in Calcutta and reiterated its faith in non-violence "for the guidance of all concerned" and clarified that nonviolence "does not include burning of public property, …" and so on. Before and after the November upheaval, Nehru went on emphasizing "the necessity of maintaining a peaceful atmosphere…" He went on telling the people that the "British are packing up", that "in the present day world the British empire has ceased to exist" and expatiated on "the folly of disorder and violence". He advised students not "to take suddenly the reins of the nation in their own hands" and "to leave political leadership to those… qualified to lead". On 3 December 1945 he assured Sir Stafford Cripps, an important member of the British cabinet (and through him the entire British cabinet), that he was doing his "utmost to avoid conflict and restrain the hotheads". Sardar Patel advised the youth not to waste their energies in "fruitless quarrels".

Again, on 27 January 1946, Nehru wrote a long letter to Cripps, in which he stated: "Elections have somewhat held people in check but as soon as these are over, events of their own motion, will march swiftly…. What happened in Calcutta two months ago and what is happening in Bombay now are significant signs of the fires below the surface. A single spark lights them". He said that any delay on the part of the British to take the initiative "might well lead to disastrous consequences". He assured Cripps (and obviously the British cabinet) that the gulf between India and Britain, which "has never been so wide", could perhaps "be bridged

even now with a great effort" and that he worked "to that end". Ignoring the Congress leaders' sermons upholding law and order and the creed of non-violence, Calcutta rose again from 11 to 13 February 1946. The occasion was a protest demonstration by students against the rigorous imprisonment for seven years passed on Abdul Rashid of the I.N.A. The city's life stopped because of a general strike. For two days mills and factories in Calcutta's suburbs remained closed; trains did not run; people fought bitter street battles with the armed police and army units riding armoured cars. A marked feature, like that in November, was strong solidarity among Hindus and Muslims who together directed their attacks against Europeans. The upheaval surpassed that in November. According to official estimates, 84 persons became martyrs and 300 injured. As in November, the anti-imperialist wave in Calcutta and the suburbs sent ripples throughout Bengal. Bands of Congress, Muslim League and Communist volunteers moved along the streets of Calcutta and neighbouring areas jointly and helped in restoring order. On 13 February Swadhinata, the Bengali organ of the CPI, condemned indiscipline and disorder as the Congress president was doing.

Waves of anti-imperialist struggle rose one after another in different parts of India - from North to South, from East to West _ and lashed at the regime of the imperialists. The most spectacular and most significant among them was the uprising in Bombay which began on 18 February 1946. The ratings of the Royal Indian Navy (R.I.N.) rose in revolt first in Bombay and then in Karachi, Calcutta and Madras. The rebel navymen, who had various grievances - bad food, racial discrimination, insults meted out by British officers and so on - were inspired by the deeds of Subhas and the example of the I.N.A.

By 22 February 1946 the rebel sailors were in control of about 22 vessels in Bombay, including the flagship of the British Vice-Admiral. A total of 78 ships of the R.I.N., 20 shore establishments and 20,000 ratings were involved in the struggle. Over a thousand men in the Royal Indian Air Force camps in Bombay came out on a sympathy strike. When ordered, Indian soldiers refused to fire on the R.I.N. ratings in Bombay as well as in Karachi. On 21 February the strike by the navymen developed into a pitched

battle between them and British troops who had been called in as Indian soldiers refused to fire.21 And Bombay's workers and youth, irrespective of the community to which they belonged, stood by the heroic men of the navy, carried food to them, erected barricades and fought pitched battles with armed policemen and several British battalions equipped with armoured cars and tanks. On 22 February, Bombay observed a general strike in the teeth of the opposition from big Congress and Muslim League leaders.

Ignoring the Congress and League leaders, the entire working class of Bombay came out at the call of the Naval Central Strike Committee, which was supported by the CPI. For two days there were pitched battles on the city's streets, in which, according to official estimates, there were about 1,500 casualties including more than 200 dead. "The British tanks could clear the streets", wrote B. C. Dutt, one of the leaders of the revolt, "only after hundreds had been shot down. This was the first time in the turbulent history of India's freedom movement that the rulers were forced to use tanks to battle with unarmed and leaderless people.... February 21 had been the ratings' day. February 22 belonged to the workers of Bombay."

In his 'Foreword' to Dutt's book, S. Natarajan wrote: "What was impressive among the ratings was their complete freedom from communal or sectarian prejudices and their staunch loyalty to each other." To quote Dutt, "The R.I.N. mutiny was the one conspiracy against the crown in which there was no king's witness. They tried their best. They drew blank".

Besides Bombay, Karachi was the scene of actual fighting between navymen and British soldiers. Gurkha soldiers refused to obey orders to fire on the Hindustan, an old sloop, which put up a brave fight. The Gurkha soldiers had to be replaced by British soldiers. Not only did the Indian army units refuse to obey orders to fight the navymen, they went on strike in several places in sympathy with the rebel navymen. We have noted that one thousand men of the Indian Air Force went on sympathy strike in Bombay. So did the men of the Air Force in Poona, Calcutta, Madras and Ambala. To quote Dutt, "An R.I.A.F. squadron, which had been ordered to proceed to Bombay, was grounded at Jodhpur; every aircraft had mysteriously developed engine trouble."

Hallett, then Governor of the U.P., informed Wavell on 19 November 1945 that soldiers of the Air Force stationed in Allahabad, Bamrauli and Cawnpore had sent their contributions to the I.N.A. Defence Fund. The Indian Air Force stationed in Calcutta opposed the court martial of the I.N.A. men. It sent its subscription to the I.N.A. Defence fund with the words: "for the defence of the brave and patriotic sons of India." Penderel Moon noted: "There was also unrest at this time in the R.I.A.F. and in some of the technical units of the Indian Army." Not only was there unrest in some technical units of the army but army units, as pointed out before, disobeyed orders in Bombay and Karachi.

In the Jubbalpur cantonment soldiers staged a revolt in March 1946 and in Dehra Dun Gurkha soldiers went on strike. In some places the police also rose in revolt. In March 1946 the police in Allahabad and Delhi went on hunger-strike. In April 10,000 policemen struck work. In September the military police went on strike in Patna and Begusarai. There was a widespread strike by policemen in Bihar in March 1947. The wall sedulously erected by the British Raj to segregrate the armed forces from the people crumbled down. At no time since the First War of Indian Independence in 1857-8 did the regular armed forces come out to defend the cause of freedom as they did now.

The brave men of the navy refused to be cowed by any threat - not even the threat of Admiral Godfrey (who had flown in bombers) to sink the navy. They appealed to political parties to lead them, promised to hand over to them the navy which they had renamed the Indian National Navy. But no political party, not even the CPI, responded to their appeal though they could have access to the rebel men of the navy.

Jinnah's appeal to them, especially the Muslims among them, to surrender came in the early hours of 23 February when their representatives were meeting to decide their future course of action. Dutt wrote: "… the overwhelming majority were for a fight to death and not for surrender." The Naval Central Strike Committee ultimately took the decision to surrender, stating that they were surrendering not to the British Raj but to the Congress and the League. In their last message to the people, they said: "For the first time the blood of the men in the services and the people

flowed together in a common cause. We in the services will never forget this. We also know that you, our brothers and sisters, will never forget. Long live our great people. Jai Hind."

After the surrender the man-hunt began. More than two thousands of the rebels were arrested and kept in detention camps; about five hundred were sentenced to prison terms to serve as common criminals. The top Congress leaders, who had given the pledge that "no disciplinary action" would be taken, did little to keep their pledge.

What role did the Congress leaders play during the historic naval revolt? Sardar Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, S.K. Patil (secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, and later, minister of the central government), Jinnah and Chundrigar of the Muslim League openly opposed the call for a strike on 22 February issued by the Naval Central Strike Committee and advised the navymen to surrender to the British. Patil had secret confabulations with the Bombay governor and the Congress and the League placed 'volunteers' at the service of the Raj to "assist the police" and British army units to fight the people. Colville wrote to Wavell that on 22 February he "saw several of these volunteers… and they did useful though limited work".

Bombay observed a successful general strike in the teeth of the bitter opposition of the Congress and the League leaders. Workers and students of Bombay fought pitched battles in the streets with British army units and the armed police, who were assisted by Congress and League volunteers.

At a mass meeting held in Bombay with the permission of the Bombay government on 26 February, Nehru and Patel strongly condemned "the mass violence in Bombay", that is, the resistance of the navymen and workers who had dared to raise the banner of anti-imperialist revolt. Addressing the press next day, Nehru thundered: 'The R.I.N. Central Strike Committee had no business to issue such an appeal [to the city of Bombay to observe a sympathy strike]. I will not tolerate this kind of thing." The Nehrus alone had the right to issue calls for strikes!

Gandhi, the prophet of non-violence, condemned the rebels for their thoughtless orgy of violence - not the real orgy of violence

by the Raj, of which the people were victims. To him the "combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy…" He went on denouncing those who disbelieved in British professions that they would grant freedom to India.

It was a country-wide anti-imperialist revolt. Wavell noted in his diary on 7 March 1946 that the victory parade that was organized in Delhi was boycotted and crowds of men burnt down the Town Hall. Workers were on the march everywhere despite the opposition of Congress and League leaders. The number of workers who went on strike in 1946 was 1,961,984 and in 1947, 1,840,784. There was an unprecedented upsurge of anti-imperialist struggle throughout the country, in which workers, peasants, students, other youths, office employees, navymen and sections of the Indian army, air force and police and lower rungs of the bureaucracy took part, and armed confrontations were frequent.

Peasant revolts took place in different parts of India. In the Thana district in Maharashtra the struggle of the Warlis broke out. In the Alleppey district of the native state of Travancore (now a part of Kerala) peasants and workers launched a united struggle. In several districts of Bengal, especially in North Bengal, the Tebhaga struggle broke out under the leadership of the Communist Party.

It was a struggle of the peasantry, mainly sharecroppers (who bore the expenses of cultivation) for a two-thirds share of the produce. Peasants fought heroically. In the undivided district of Dinajpur, forty peasants became martyrs. In 1946 began the historic struggles of the peasants in Telangana districts of the native state of Hyderabad (Telangana, now a part of Andhra Pradesh) under the leadership of the Andhra State Committee of the CPI. It developed into a struggle for land and power.

Large areas were liberated. The struggle continued even after the march of troops of the Indian government in 1948 to suppress it, until it was withdrawn unconditionally by the CPI leadership in 1951. In several other native states ruled by princes, puppets of the British Indian government, there were revolts of the people, especially in Travancore and Kashmir.

Imperialism unable to Rule in the Old Way

We have noted Commander-in-Chief Claude Auchinleck's appreciation, of 24 November 1945, of the Indian situation, with which Viceroy Wavell generally agreed. On 19 February 1946, Wavell recorded in his diary that he had seen Porter, Secretary, Home Department, who was all for capitulation to the I.N.A; that he had discussed with Bewoor, Secretary, Posts and Air Department, about a postal strike; that he had talks with Carr, A.O.C-in-C, about R.I.A.F mutiny; with Griffin, Chief Commissioner of Railways and Conran Smith, Secretary, War Transport Department, about a railway strike; and "finally the C-in-C, most gloomy of all, about R.I.N. mutiny in Bombay and the I.N.A trials; What a cheerful day - prospect or reality of three mutinies and two strikes", commented Wavell.

After referring to the "serious rioting in Bombay", "a mutiny in the R.I.N., much indiscipline in the R.I.A.F., some unrest in the Indian Army" and "threatened strikes on the Railways, and in the Post and Telegraphs", Wavell wrote to King George VI on 22 March 1946: "Perhaps the best way to look at it is that India is in the birth-pangs of a new order…"

When in late March 1946, the Cabinet Mission with Secretary of State Pethick- Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander came to India to negotiate, mainly with Congress and League leaders, a settlement of the constitutional issues and met the Viceroy's Executive Council, Edward Benthall said on behalf of it that " the Council was unanimous that a change of Government at the Centre was imperative... It [the Council's lack of confidence] is due to the uncertainty of Indian troops and police to whom they must look for defence and support in the future."

THE ROLE OF 'THE BIG BOYS OF CONGRESS AND LEAGUE'

Towards the end of March 1946, Turnbull, Secretary to the Cabinet Mission, wrote: "The only hope is that the big boys of Congress and League are said to be much alarmed lest their followers break loose and of Russia." The "big boys of Congress and League", particularly "of Congress", did not fail the imperialists; they acted in more than one way to save the Raj from the wrath of the rebellious people. As negotiations with the Cabinet Mission

started, a bitter "war of succession" began. The seemingly endless negotiations and the brave declarations with communal demands of the leaders for a larger share of the British legacy were having an insidious effect on the people, much to the satisfaction of the Raj and the Indian reactionaries. "Amidst these 'summit talks'," wrote Michael Brecher, "the poison of communalism penetrated deeper into the body politic of India."

It is a cruel irony that Calcutta, the city of many glorious anti-imperialist struggles which the people fought shoulder to shoulder, irrespective of faiths, and other democratic struggles, the latest being the very successful general strike in sympathy with the All India Postal strike, - the city of nightmares to the imperialists and their underlings in India - became the first scene of a communal blood-bath. The people elsewhere, too, became victims of the vicious 'war of succession' between the two rival sets of compradors in the absence of a revolutionary party which could lead and co-ordinate their struggles to win victory. The imperialists, instead of trying to extinguish the communal flames, welcomed them and their Indian henchmen spread them by their acts and rhetoric. Later, on 24 January 1947, the director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, noted for the benefit of the policy-makers:

> *"The game so far has been well played, in that (a) both Congress and the League have been brought into the Central Government; (b) the Indian problem has been thrust into its appropriate plane of communalism; … Grave communal disorder must not disturb us into action which would reproduce anti-British agitation."*

After the communal carnage in Calcutta, Gandhi told Wavell "that if a blood-bath was necessary, it would come about inspite of non-violence."

On 21 July 1946 he wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel: "A great many things seem to be slipping out of the hands of the Congress. The postmen do not listen to it, nor does Ahmedabad, nor do the Harijans, nor Muslims. This is a strange situation indeed."

Again, writing to Patel on 24 July, Gandhi lamented: "There are other strikes on top of the postal strike. All this looks significant…. The Congress position may seem strong on the surface but it appears to have lost its hold on the people. Or it may be that the Congress itself is involved in these troubles if only from a distance. This must be clarified; otherwise the battle which we are on the point of winning will be lost."

The Mahatma released a torrent of denunciation of strikes and strikers, especially political and 'sympathetic strikes', and asked Patel to do the same. Nehru condemned the all-India strike of one lakh extremely low-paid postal employees as "against the interests of the common people". But the fact is, the common people went on 'sympathetic strikes' throughout India on 29 July to give the postal employees their support. Those who opposed these strikes were the imperialists and the Gandhis and Nehrus. These were not adversaries but allies and they were on the same side of the barricade and the people on the other. The waves of struggle continued to rise. The situation in India was growing alarming for the British Raj and the Congress leadership.

At the end of July the India and Burma Committee of the British cabinet concluded that if "some positive action" was not taken "without delay", "the initiative might pass from His Majesty's Government. The postal strike and the threatened [all-India] railway strike were symptoms of a serious situation which might rapidly deteriorate." Wavell agreed and wired to Pethick-Lawrence on 31 July: "Widespread labour trouble exists and general situation is most unsatisfactory. The most urgent need is for a Central Government with popular support. If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary and they may put down the Communists and try to curb their own left wing." Wavell added that he disliked "intensely the idea of having an interim Government dominated by one party [Congress] but I feel that I must try to get the Congress in as soon as possible."

From U.P. Governor Wylie reported: "This strike business, for instance, is most unsettling…. With all this strike fever about, it would be too much to expect that the police would remain totally unaffected …"

The director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, warned: "… the labour situation is becoming increasingly dangerous…. I am satisfied that a responsible government, if one can be achieved, will deal more decisively with Labour than is

at present possible." On 6 August Wavell again wired to the Secretary of State: "I think it is quite likely that Congress [if it joins the government at the centre] would decide to take steps fairly soon against the communists, or otherwise the labour situation will get even worse.'

British imperialism found itself unable to rule in the old way. In an undated note Attlee wrote: "In the event of a breakdown of the administration or a general alignment of the political parties against us are we prepared to go back on our policy and seek to re-establish British rule as against the political parties and maintain it for 18 years?

The answer must clearly be No." Among the reasons he cited was the lack of the necessary military force. In a "top secret" message to the Viceroy on 25 November 1946, the Secretary of State informed him that "We could not contemplate anything in the nature of reconquest and retention of India by force against the nationally organised opposition, and quite apart from the desirability of such a decision we do not believe that it would be practicable from a political, military or economic point of view". In a footnote it has been stated that "the terms of this reply [to Wavell's letters] were agreed at a meeting" between Attlee, Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and officials of the India Office.

When the British Raj felt unable to stem the tide of revolutionary struggles, it wanted some political party or parties of India with popular support to do it for them. The Congress leaders were lending their support from the outside but that was not enough. As the Muslim League refused to join the Congress in an interim government on Congress terms, the British imperialists decided to entrust the Congress with the task of running the state machinery for them.

When British Imperialists Found it Unwise to Take Extreme Measures to Suppress the People, Congress Leaders were Entrusted to do So

The Congress leaders felt no less worried at the situation as it was developing. They were only too eager to join hands with the British imperialists to fight back the revolutionary tide and suppress the rebellious people. In August the Congress Working

Committee adopted a resolution condemning the growing lack of discipline and disregard of obligations on the part of workers.

On 5 August Wavell reported to Pethick-Lawrence that, according to an unimpeachable source, "Patel… was convinced that the Congress must enter the Government to prevent chaos spreading in the country as the result of labour unrest." The British cabinet had decided on 1 August that 'if the Muslim League were unwilling to come in [on Congress terms], it would be necessary to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government with Congress only".

So Congress president Nehru was invited to form an 'interim' government with himself as vice-president under Wavell. The Congress leaders undertook to fight and suppress the rebellious, anti-imperialist people - not only from the outside but also from the inside of the imperialist state machinery - to serve as imperialism's shield and protect it from the wrath of the people. There was a preliminary round of 'transfer of power' when the 'interim' government was installed in office on 2 September 1946 - the first round of 'transfer of power' through which imperialism tried to save itself. In his letter to Mountbatten, dated 18 March 1947, appointing Mountbatten Viceroy of India, Attlee wrote: "… while the Interim Government would not have the same powers as a Dominion Government, His Majesty's Government would treat the Interim Government with the same consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government…"

Imperialism's hopes were more than fulfilled, its reliance on the Congress leaders to extricate it from an "increasingly dangerous" situation was more than justified. On 9 October 1946 Nehru informed Wavell that "A short while ago the [U.P. Congress] Government issued an ordinance of the kind we have been issuing here to tide over the period from 1st October…" The U.P. ordinance "provided for the maintenance of public order and essential services through preventive detention, imposition of collective fines, and the control of meetings and processions."

On 21 January 1947 Wavell informed Pethick-Lawrence that searches, still then incomplete, had been conducted, that "the Madras [Congress] Government appear to have taken action against communists and are contemplating a conspiracy case

[conspiracy against the King-Emperor] against leading members of the party…. The Bombay [Congress] Government have also written strongly for Central action or a Central directive against the party and indicating that they propose, in the absence of either of these, themselves to take strong action for detention of Communist agitators who constitute a great threat to public tranquillity in that Province."

In this holy war against the anti-imperialist people, the Congress leaders would brook no interference even from British Parliament. Wavell's message added that Home Member Patel deprecated the idea of any discussion in British Parliament of the action taken against Communists "as it can only impede the efforts of Congress to deal with the revolutionary element in the country."

A discussion in Parliament would expose the fascist nature of the Congress leaders' attack on "the revolutionary element in the country".

The country-wide search of the offices of the CPI, trade unions, Kisan Sabha, Students Federation, Friends of the Soviet Union, etc., was carried out "under the direction of the Government of India", of which Patel was Home Member. But in reply to R.P. Dutt's cable, Nehru unhesitatingly wired back: "The police raids on the Communists took place without the authority or knowledge of the Ministers." A similar reply he sent to Harry Pollitt.

Even Wavell was amused. Communicating to Pethick-Lawrence on 29 January 1947 that "the Congress Government in Bombay had decided that the only way to deal with the Communists was to resort to detention without trial", Wavell had a dig at the Labour Party minister: "it may come as a shock to you if they should resort to such 'imperialistic' methods".

On 27 February the Bombay Governor reported to Wavell that Bombay's Congress ministry "are determined to handle the communist and other extreme Left Wing elements firmly, and are bringing forward this session a new Public Safety Measures Bill which re-enacts all our Ordinances in full…"

The Bombay Governor also wrote on 2 April to Viceroy Mountbatten that the Congress ministers of Bombay felt that "their real opponents are the Congress Socialists and the

Communists" - not the British imperialists. At its twenty-second session held in Calcutta from 13 to 19 February 1947, the All India Trade Union Congress expressed its concern at the "indiscriminate firing by the police on workers" and stated in a resolution: "Firing was resorted to in Coimbatore, Golden Rock, Kolar Gold Fields, Ratlam, Amalner and Kanpur, resulting in the death of more than 50 persons including women and children and injury to more than 400."

After referring to "the suppression of civil liberties", ban on workers' meetings, arrests and internment of trade union workers, destruction of union properties and so on, the resolution added: "In Madras alone, hundreds of labour workers are in jail, and in some places, Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been applied demanding security of good behaviour from labour leaders."

The AITUC also protested against "the recent amendments to the Bombay District Police Act and the enactment of ordinances in the provinces of Punjab, Madras, Bengal, United Provinces and the Central Provinces under which persons can be arrested, externed or detained without trial."

It also condemned the governments of Madras, Bombay and the Central Provinces [all Congress-ruled provinces] for detaining trade unionists in jail without trial and for externing some of them. It was an all-out war against the people who were fighting against cruel exploitation and oppression and for freedom, that the Congress leaders waged before and after their assumption of office at the Centre. At the Meerut session of the Congress presided over by Kripalani and addressed by Nehru among others, held in November 1946, Sardar Mota Singh, a delegate, "thundered that the British were using Pandit Nehru and his colleagues as 'political cows' to prevent the masses from attacking the British power, standing behind the cows." As we shall see, it is to these "political cows" that the British transferred power in what became the Indian Union.

The Congress leaders found that along with repression other means were necessary: they tried other means also. One of these was to try to break the workers' unity, which had withstood all communal tension.

On 12 August 1946 the CWC adopted a resolution drafted by Nehru to organize the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh on an all-India basis This organization had been functioning in Ahmedabad under another name on Gandhian lines as a stooge organization of Ahmedabad's textile magnates. When militant working class struggles threatened the very foundations of British imperialism and the Indian big bourgeoisie, the Nehrus took upon themselves the mission of splitting the working class.

And at its meeting in Calcutta on 7 December 1945 the CWC took disciplinary action against the communist members of the AICC and asked all subordinate committees to purge the Congress of all communists. As part of their fierce onslaught against the people, they accused the communists of having cooperated with the government in order to isolate them from the people.

The irony was that when they themselves were acting as willing agents of the Raj to war against the people they accused the communists of having cooperated with the Raj after Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union - which they did for ideological reasons. And what about Gandhi who pledged cooperation with British war efforts in 1944 and 1945 - and people like Rajagopalachari? Gandhi's disciple D.G. Tendulkar observed that Gandhi "was aware of the deep hatred of the British rulers that was in the people's heart. To forestall and prevent the conflagration of the deep-seated hatred was his constant concern."

On 4 December 1946, Nehru said:

"There was a great urge among the masses of India for political progress. The Congress leaders had tried with some success to restrain that urge and keep it behind the Government."

Though essentially true, it is an understatement. Throughout the twenties and the thirties and the Second World War years and after, the Congress leaders acted as the enemy within (of all the top Congress leaders, Subhas Chandra Bose alone was a patriot and that is why he was hounded out of the Congress in 1939). The others did not hesitate to stoop to any falsehood and deception and occasional, atrocious attacks on the people (as when they held ministerial offices in eight provinces between 1937 and 1940 and again from 1946) to kill their "great urge" to become free.

Nor did the CPI emerge as a rallying point for nationalists. Its leadership strengthened the people's illusions about the Congress leaders instead of shattering them. To cite only one instance here, P.C. Joshi, then general secretary of the CPI, wrote in Congress and Communists (1944): "To us the Congress is our parent organization, its leaders our political fathers…" He described his own party men as "Communist Congressmen". Individual communists and groups of communists stood by the people bravely and selflessly and led many of their struggles.

But in the absence of an organized revolutionary party - the crucial subjective factor - the objectively revolutionary situation gave rise not to revolution but to counter-revolution: the most unnatural partition of India on communal lines costing enormous blood-baths and close integration of the two new states into the capitalist-imperialist system, which preserved all the structural barriers to her development. A telegram from London to Campbell-Johnson, Viceroy Mountbatten's press attaché, dated 3 June 1947, said: "A packed House of Commons listened with intense interest to Prime Minister's announcement [of the agreement between the British Raj and the leaders of the Congress and the League to create two new states on the basis of partition of India and dominion status] this afternoon. Proposals and first reaction from India undoubtedly created profound gratification among all Parties. Sense of unity and recognition of tremendous issues and possibilities involved were comparable only with most historic moments during war.... This has been a great day for us all."

India was regarded by the British imperialists as "the essential linchpin in the structure of the Commonwealth". They devoutly wished that India would remain within the British Commonwealth. As early as 16 April 1943, when World War II raged, the Secretary of State, L. Amery, wrote to Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "To keep India within the Commonwealth during the next ten years is much the biggest thing before us… [and] should be the supreme goal of the British policy." He wrote to British Foreign Secretary Eden in a similar vein on 9 May 1943. The goal of the British imperialists was to have a self-governing India within the British Commonwealth and to enmesh her with Commonwealth ties - economic, political and military.

When "much the biggest thing before us" was achieved, with Nehru and Patel themselves seeking dominion status, it was, no doubt, a "great triumph" of the British imperialists. The reaction of the U.S.imperialists was quite enthusiastic, though there was "the most appalling bloodshed and confusion" in India.

The Nehrus assured the British Raj that "in their view Hindustan would not ultimately leave the Commonwealth, once Dominion Status had been accepted". But they emphasized "the need for secrecy on this matter because if it became known that Congress leaders had privately encouraged the idea, the possibility of their being able to bring their party round to it would be serious[ly] jeopardized."

How independent and sovereign did India become after the transfer of power?

Did India become truly independent and sovereign with the transfer of power or in name only? Did she undergo a revolution - the overthrow of the rule of imperialism, big comprador capital and feudalism, the structural barriers to her development? Or, did imperialism make a formal withdrawal behind its flunkeys - the "political cows", as Sardar Mota Singh said - in order to blunt the edge of the national liberation struggle? Was the old order of the colonial era - the order the colonizers built in order to help them best to exploit and oppress the Indian people, after destroying the pre-colonial society - economic, social, political and military, refashioned by an independent, sovereign India which would lead to her regeneration?

The Indian economy had no independence of its own and remained an appendage of the economy of Britain during the colonial rule. British capital dominated every sector of Indian economy and sucked the life-blood of our people. We shall cite a few facts to point out that Indian economy did not become free from imperialist fetters after the transfer of power: the stranglehold of metropolitan capital was more and more tightened instead of being relaxed. Nehru assured the British capitalists in December 1946 that they would have full freedom to flourish here.

In different official resolutions, speeches and so on, the Indian government extended a warm welcome to imperialist capital. An official memorandum of the Indian government in September 1949 declared: "The policy of the Government of India was to allow foreign capital to come in to operate freely in the industrial field…. Every attempt must be made to secure the maximum possible influx of foreign capital in the shortest possible time."

The Birlas' Eastern Economist wrote in a leading article: "India for many years to come will need foreign capital and technical skill which must come mainly from the United States and Great Britain… it is clear from the Eastern Economist's recent calculations so far as India is concerned that without foreign investment, it is quite impossible now to maintain our standard of life [already quite abominable]… India's hunger for food this year is great but her hunger for capital - if less evident - is nearly as deep."

Some Indian magnates such as Tata and Birla had been negotiating with British and U.S. monopolies for the establishment of joint enterprises in India even before the 'transfer of power' and some deals were already concluded. On 2 May 1945, Manu Subedar, a small industrialist and leader of an anti-collaborationist group in the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, denounced in the Central Legislative Assembly the collaboration between foreign monopolies and Indian big capital as "illegitimate marriage". The joint ventures between imperialist monopolies and Indian big capital soon became the norm in India, encouraged by the Indian government. And trade followed the old colonial pattern.

For some years after the transfer of power the Indian rupee was tied to British sterling. When in September 1949, Britain was forced to devalue the pound in relation to the dollar by 30.5 per cent, India had to devalue the rupee in the same proportion. Announcing the devaluation, John Matthai, India's then Finance Minister, said that he "had to act, not on conviction born of logical necessity but, so to speak, by the compulsion of events; since sterling was devalued, there was no other course open to us." As a result, India's exports became cheaper and imports dearer and the people became poorer.

The sterling debts - between Rs 1,700 crore and Rs 1,800 crore in 1946 - tied the Indian economy to the metropolitan economy. These sterling balances, which Britain owed to India, represented the value of goods and services compulsorily taken away from

India during World War II and in the months following it. Indian food, raw materials, textiles and other finished products were taken away not only for the army but for the civil population of England and other countries when the Indian people were victims of acute scarcity, steep inflation, sky-kissing prices, black markets and famine.

The goods were taken by Britain at controlled or negotiated prices at which Indians could not get them. "The price paid by India", to quote Subedar, "runs into millions of lives." The British government refused to give any assurance that it would not scale down the debts: it even refused to enter into any negotiations about them. The Anglo-U.S. Financial Agreement of December 1945 made it mandatory on the U.K to scale down the debts. In his memorandum on Indian Sterling Balances, dated 5 August 1947, Hugh Dalton, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote like a super-imperialist: "The Indians have asked for releases of £48.5 millions [out of £1,160 millions estimated by him] from the blocked account for the remainder of 1947. On my instructions the request has been rejected… No commitment for further releases after the end of 1947 has been made in the present negotiations, nor are we committed to recognize the total, without further cancellation or adjustment …. More than three quarters of them earn only one-half per cent [as interest]." This was one of the swindling tricks of imperialism. The Indian ruling classes collaborated in it even after the transfer of power.

In a note on India's sterling balances, Subedar wrote: "There is no reason why assets, at least those who [which] belong to Britishers non-resident in India, should not be mobilized by the British Government with a view to reducing the outstanding balance." He wrote to Patel, "It is most extraordinary that three Cabinet ministers [members of the British Cabinet Mission, who came to India in March 1946] should have come here and not a word was said to them by any Indian in regard to the sterling balances."

On 7 July 1950, Nehru said that, "our economy is obviously tied to England and other allied powers."

In November 1951, G.D.Birla proposed the formation of an Indo-American Development Corporation with business magnates

and officials of the two countries - a kind of "supertrust directing the future of Indian economy." And in January 1952, B.R.Sen, then India's Ambassador to the U.S.A, "recommended an investment company in which both American and Indian private capital would participate initially on a 70:30 per cent basis". Both the representative of the Indian government and an outstanding leader of the Indian big bourgeoisie were keen that the future of the Indian economy should be directed not by the Indians but chiefly by U.S. big capital. Were these the voices of an independent, sovereign India or of a client state?

As regards feudal or semi-feudal relations in the vast countryside, there was no fundamental change, except that some grosser manifestations of feudalism were curbed. There was no democratic, or agrarian, revolution in India. There was no basic change in the property structure in the rural areas.

We shall confine ourselves to a few words on the changes in the political and social system in India after the transfer of power. The long-cherished aim of the alien rulers to have India within the British Commonwealth was fulfilled. The British imperialists of all hues celebrated the transfer of power on the basis of partition and dominion status as a "great triumph", as a gain not a loss. They were sure that those to whom they had entrusted the subcontinent would defend and preserve their long-term interests in India and in the Indian Ocean region. And this is how they resolved their bitter contradiction with the Indian people. Indian 'independence' was the new face of British imperialism in India - a manoeuvre very deceitful and very successful.

India's 'freedom' was ushered in with the playing of 'God Save the King' followed by Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka. Nehru toasted the health of the British king and Mountbatten toasted the health of the Dominion government. It was symbolical that Union Jack was not lowered; it flew proudly when the Indian flag was unfurled.

The last Viceroy and Governor-General of India became the head of the new Indian state and Nehru and Patel "wanted him to stay on as long as he would". H.V. Hodson, a former Reforms Commissioner of India, observed: "By a strange paradox Lord Mountbatten as constitutional governor-general of independent

[!] India exercised more direct executive authority in certain spheres than he had enjoyed as autocratic viceroy." Nehru and his colleagues sought Mountbatten's advice about the composition of the cabinet for post-colonial India, "tore up the list of cabinet" they had prepared and changed four members of the old list. The trust that the top Congress leaders, quite astute men, reposed in Mountbatten reflected their trust in - and their closeness to - British imperialism. Gandhi had said earlier: "The sole referee of what is or is not in the interest of India as a whole will be Mountbatten in his personal capacity." Leonard Mosley wrote that "from that moment on" - Nehru's first meeting with Mountbatten in India - Nehru became "Mountbatten's man". We shall not refer here to Patel's effusive expressions of gratitude to Mountbatten. These were the persons who, with the complementary role played by the leaders of the CPI - P.C. Joshi and his associates - left a profound influence on the course of Indian history.

Invited by the Congress leaders, Sir John Colville and Sir Archibald Nye (who became next year U.K High Commissioner in New Delhi) remained as governors of the two largest provinces - Bombay and Madras. While in 'free' India, they flew Union Jack on the bonnets of their cars. Campbell-Johnson commented that the invitation to Colville and Nye to continue as governors "gets our relations with the new India off to a start good beyond all expectations".

As President of the Indian Constituent Assembly Rajendra Prasad requested Lord Mountbatten, the head of the new State, to convey "a message of loyal greetings from this House" to the British King. It said: "That message [the King's message to the new dominion] will serve as an inspiration to the great work on which we launch today, and I have no doubt that we anticipate with great pleasure association with Great Britain of a different kind. I hope and trust that the interest and sympathy and the kindness which have always inspired His Majesty, will continue in favour of India and we shall be worthy of them."

As the Congress leaders had assured the British imperialists, the Indian Union joined the British Commonwealth of Nations, which recognized the British sovereign as head of the Commonwealth, to whom all dominions had to swear allegiance. It may be noted that on 2 May 1949, almost immediately after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, Attlee declared in the House of Commons "with reference to the London agreement that no distinction should be drawn between the use of the terms 'Commonwealth', 'British Commonwealth' or 'British Empire', all of which should be regarded as interchangeable". Appreciating Nehru's role in the 1949 London Conference, Attlee said: "Mr. Nehru for India showed high statesmanship in accepting a new relationship whereby in respect for India the [British] monarch was recognized as Head of the Commonwealth."

Both Nehru and Jinnah agreed that India and Pakistan would fly the Union Jack on twelve days in the year but wanted that this should not be publicized. "In fact," Mountbatten wrote, "they are worried about their extremists agitating against over-stressing the British connection although they are quite willing to retain it [the Union Jack in the upper canton of the Indian flag, as designed by Mountbatten] themselves."

Indian society underwent no radical change. The administrative structure built by the colonizers remained. The British-trained Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.), the steel-frame of the colonial administration, continued as before. Its successor, the Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.), to quote Francine Frankel, "retained the structure and style of its elitist forerunner, perpetuating a national administrative system that in numbers and outlook was more suitable to carrying out the narrow colonial functions of law and order than the broad responsibilities for economic development of an independent government." The police and the judiciary continued with little change. The same laws prevailed with few changes, only the repressive laws were given more teeth and the coercive apparatus of the State has been strengthened with the passing of years as para-military forces have proliferated. Formally, colonialism died but the colonial spirit and structure remained.

The Indian Constitution, under which we are governed, owes much to the British. The Constituent Assembly, that framed the Constitution, was constituted on the basis of the 16 May (1946) Statement of the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy. The

members of the Constituent Assembly were not elected on the basis of adult suffrage, which Congress leaders like Nehru had promised several times. The then existing provincial legislative assemblies of 'British India', formed under the Government of India Act of 1935 (which Nehru called a "charter of slavery"), which restricted the franchise to about 11.5 per cent of the people and provided for separate electorates for different religious communities, were asked to elect their representatives by single, transferable votes of their members (except Europeans), Muslim and non-Muslim members voting separately. And, according to an agreement between Nehru and the Chamber of Princes, on the accession of the native states to the Indian Union, about fifty per cent of the seats allotted to them in the Constituent Assembly were filled by nominees of the princes (who had been stooges of the British government) and the rest were supposed to represent the people of those states.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly was convened by Viceroy Wavell and held on 9 December 1946. Speaking at the subjects committee meeting during the Meerut session of the Congress in November 1946, Nehru declared: "when we attain freedom, we shall have another Constituent Assembly." Deception was the name of their game. The draft of the Constitution was prepared by members of the I.C.S., chief among whom was Sir Benegal N. Rau, the constitutional adviser to the Constituent Assembly.

Campbell-Johnson pointed out that dominion status made possible the maximum administrative and constitutional continuity, on the basis of the great India Act of 1935. "Approximately 250 articles [out of 395 articles]," wrote Michael Brecher, "were taken either verbatim or with minor changes in phraseology from the 1935 Government of India Act, and the basic principles remained unchanged." G.D. Birla proudly claimed that "we have embodied large portions of the [1935] Act as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves and which shows that in it [the 1935 Act] was cast the pattern of our future plans". "The new constitution accepted the basically British compromise of 1935", observed Thomas Balogh, the Oxford economist who was for some years adviser to the British cabinet.

As regards military arrangements, the old order continued in the main. Immediately after the transfer of power Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, became the Supreme Commander of the armed forces of India and Pakistan. The commanders of the three branches of the armed forces of India - the army, the navy and the air force - remained British. Until the late fifties the commander of the Indian navy was British. An appeal was made to British officers and other British personnel in India's armed forces to continue and a 50 per cent increase in 'India Allowance' was granted to British 'other ranks'. 49 per cent of the British officers and 94 per cent of 'other ranks' were retained in the armed forces of 'free' India. But there was no place in the Indian army for the officers and men of the I.N.A.(whom Nehru described in 1945 and 1946 as "the pick of the Indian Army", "a splendid lot", "a fine lot" - "brave, stout-hearted and capable and very politically minded" - whose "standard of… fighting is admittedly very high" and "It is possible they will be acceptable to the future army of free India"). The navy men who rose against the British in February 1946 and the Indian soldiers who joined the Indonesians in their struggle against the Dutch imperialists who were trying to reconquer their country at the end of the war, were not reinstated for their revolt against imperialism.

The Joint Defence Council of India and Pakistan was composed of Mountbatten, Auchinleck, Baldev Singh and Liaquat Ali - two Britishers and one representative each of India and Pakistan - with Mountbatten as Chairman. Both Nehru and Jinnah "wholeheartedly welcomed" the British government's proposal to negotiate "overall Commonwealth defence arrangements". The Joint Defence Council was empowered to conduct negotiations on behalf of India and Pakistan. To quote from Mountbatten's message to London dated 8th August 1947:

"As I shall continue to be Chairman of the Joint Defence Council after 15th August, I shall hope to be able to regulate these discussions [with the British military delegation to decide on 'overall Commonwealth defence arrangements'] and trust that the desired objects will be achieved."

India became a partner of the "overall Commonwealth" military arrangements. Besides, as L.Natarajan pointed out, "India signed

its first military agreement with the United States under the Mutual Defence Assistance Programme in March 1951..." These military agreements were concluded not between equals but between giants and a pigmy, between powerful imperialist countries - one of them a superpower seeking to dominate the world - and India, an underdeveloped country teeming with "half-naked, half-starved" people. "Thus came to an end", wrote Attlee later, "the direct rule of the British in India." Do all these facts indicate that India became independent and sovereign with the transfer of power?

"…the fact is", writes Robin D.G.Kelley, "while colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state was not." Imperialism today, as Thomas Balogh said, does not require overt political domination to enforce its rule. Instead of directly administering a dependent country, it dominates it through local agents and using the levers of capital (both direct investment and 'aid', a euphemism for loan-capital), technology, military hardware, etc. Besides, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international institutions, set up on the initiative of U.S. imperialism, play the role of the colonial administration of enforcing the rules of the imperialist game. The essence of neo-colonialism or semi-colonialism lies in subordinating the dependent country's economy, politics and military strategy, to the economy and global strategy of imperialism.

Though India did not become free, an important change occurred. From a colony India became a semi-colony: India's dependence on Britain yielded to dependence on several imperialist powers, chief among which is the U.S.A. A semi-colony is formally independent, but in reality, it is dependent on several imperialist powers. In this 'semi-dependent country' the domestic ruling classes enjoy political power but within the framework of basic dependence on imperialist powers. As part of the world capitalist-imperialist system, they cannot shake off this dependence, for they can survive and expand by collaborating with and serving imperialist monopoly capital as they did before - at the cost of the abysmal misery and wretchedness of the people.

8

The Indian Dominian

The dominion of India officially transitioned from the Mughal to the British India in 1757. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1947 the British colonial rule ended, but the new India built and influenced by both the Mughals and the British became partitioned into India and Pakistan. While the post-1947 India continues undivided, albeit over the occasional flurries of internecine resistance from some citizens, Pakistan became further divided in 1971. The people of Bangladesh earned their independence by powering through a civil war and suffering a genocide master-minded by the ruling elite and meted out by the Pakistani Army.

Despite these fundamental changes, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan remain intricately linked in multiple ways. We are increasingly being pulled asunder against each other for reasons that are both internal and external. Our history, heritage and identity are intertwined. Just as our past is intermingled, so are the present and the future. It is critical, ever more, to re-learn our history in a non-partisan manner and develop a vision, perspective and orientation that help us to forge ahead with a positive attitude of bridge building.

Dr. Bain recently took a stab at flinging some insults upon Bangladeshi Muslims. He decided that the naming of a navy ship after Sheikh Mujib was an "insult to Islam"; next, he proceeded to make hasty generalizations about the history of this subcontinent, especially the partition of India. I propose that Dr. Bain?s approach could serve as a poignant reason for us to endeavor to better understand the difficulties in building a better relationship. When people are biased and prejudiced, they might delude themselves

with (rephrasing Tagore) "Nodir epar chaare shostir proshshash, joto dosh oparete amar bishshash," and fail to recognize their own follies and wrongdoings.

When someone makes a hasty generalization, as Dr. Bain did in "Re: Why are we a least developed country" that Pakistan was based upon mostly hatred." he also chisels a marked impression not only of his observation that India was partitioned but, also, of his conjecture that Pakistan was formed due to a one-sided hatred, campaign and demand of Muslim Pakistan-seekers. From such perspective, "Bangladesh has a lot of false glory. Is it rooted in the FALSEHOOD of the concept of Pakistan that was responsible for the Bangladesh that we have now?"

This probably is not an uncommon view among the Indians and a sizable number of Bangladeshis, especially among the post-1971 generation. But is his an informed and accurate, unbiased and objective view of the pertinent history? It is to test that turbid water that I posed the question to Dr. Bain to help us understand his views about Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. His response seems to indicate that he is familiar with Maulana Azad, his life and works. Indeed, he quoted from Maulana Azad's autobiography "India Wins Freedom" in support of his own view that how Maulana was totally opposed to the concept of Pakistan. It appears that he has very high respect for Maulana Azad and his autobiography to the extent that recognizes him as a key player in the history of India's independence struggle, Dr. Bain wrote: "I am sure, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's role as an Indian leader can be an eye opener to much of the intelligentsia of Bangladesh."

Interestingly, Dr. Bain did not include the Indians in his list of those whose eyes might be opened by his role. The recommendation was primarily for "the intelligentsia of Bangladesh." Could it not also be an eye-opener for the intelligentsia of India, including Dr. Bain himself? He also urged the "good writers who have the time to do this, to educate us more with Maulana Azad's wisdom." Well, Dr. Bain, if Maulana Azad's wisdom really has any value, and if you have read Maulana's India Wins Freedom, then you should reconsider your opinion that "Muhammad Ali Jinnah fits the title of 'founder of Indian partition' the most."

As you agreed with me, Dr. Bain, Maulana Azad throughout his entire life was bitterly opposed to the partition of India, to Pakistan Movement, to Muslim League, and to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, but he did not think that Jinnah "fits the title ... the most." The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan were complex historical developments that involved the interplay of so many people - key people. Thus, one can't quite identify a single person as "the founder of Indian partition." Yet, Maulana Azad did, and if we, especially "the intelligentsia of Bangladesh" are to benefit from his "wisdom," then it is not Jinnah, but someone else. According to Maulana Azad, "It would not perhaps be unfair to say that Vallabhbhai Patel was the founder of Indian partition." [India Wins Freedom, Orient Longman, p. 198]

Dr. Bain also mentioned: "The 'Two Nations Theory' was indeed a one-sided thing from the Pakistan-seekers, unless if you argue about facts like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ...." Mr. N. Bhattacharyya has already quite capably pointed out the inaccuracy and unhistoric nature of this "one-sided thing" argument. But since such (mis)perception or (mis)understanding as exemplified in the statements of Dr. Bain might be quite common, I would like to take this opportunity to turn to the person about whom he wrote: "There is a lot more to learn from Maulana Azad."

Yes, there is a lot to learn from Maulana Azad and his works. In this series, drawing primarily from the work of Maulana Azad (India Wins Freedom), I would like to offer the synopsis of his account that repudiates such naive, prejudiced, uninformed and ahistoric view that Pakistan is based on "one-sided" "two-nations theory", showcasing Pakistan-seeker Muslims' "hatred." Actually, the partition of India AND the creation of Pakistan were due to an interplay of three separate forces: the Muslims, the Hindus and the British. A proposition of any one group's hatred and "one-sided thing", whether the Hindus, the Muslims or the British, is simply untenable. And, indeed, that might serve as an important foundation to rise above our partisan frame of reference and to seek common ground with an emphasis on building bridges.

I hope to present this account of Maulana Azad without adding anything substantive from myself and I intend to do so in a non-partisan spirit and with a goal of self-education. I may

have certain questions, which I will identify and hopefully others can help fill those gaps.

I also hereby clarify that my presentation of Maulana Azad's account does not necessarily indicate that I agree with his particular viewpoints and perspective on any specific topic, subject or issue.

TWO THINGS LEFT A BAD TASTE

Maulana Azad closes the introduction to his book India Wins Freedom (IWF hereafter) with the following comments:

"In 1935, the Government of India Act was passed which provided for provincial autonomy and a federal Government at the Centre. It is here that the story I wish to tell in the present volume begins." [p. 13]

That is the context in 1935 wherein Maulana Azad begins his analysis.

"In the first elections held after the introduction of provincial autonomy the Congress won an overwhelming victory. It secured absolute majority in five of the majors provinces and was the single largest party in four. ... The victory of the Congress has to be judged against the Congress' early reluctance to contest the elections at all. The Government of India Act 1935 provided for complete provincial autonomy but there was a fly in the ointment. Special powers were reserved to the Governors to declare a state of emergency and assume all powers to himself. Democracy in the provinces could therefore function only so long as the Governors permitted it. The position was even worse so far as the Central Government was concerned. Here there was an attempt to reintroduce the principle of diarchy which has already been discredited in the provinces. Not only was the Central Government to be a weak federation but it was also overweighted in favour of the princess and other vested interests. Those could be generally expected to side with the British rulers of the country." [p. 14]

Almost invariably, the decisions made by the British colonial rule were in line with its own interests. Congress was against this type of British arrangement of diarchy. Differences of opinion

existed within Congress regarding participation in election. The difference persisted even after the election whether Congress should assume office accepting the current restrictive arrangements. Internal discussions as well as further negotiations with the colonial government in India ultimately paved the way to form government wherever it was possible.

"That was the first occasion that Congress was taking up the responsibility of administration. It was thus a trial for the Congress and people watched how the organization would live up to its national character. The Muslim League's main propaganda against Congress had been that it was national only in name. Not content with defamation of Congress in general terms, the League also gave out that the Congress Ministries were carrying out atrocities against the minorities. ....

Stories of atrocities circulated by the Muslim League was pure invention but two things happened at the time which left a bad impression about the attitude of the Provincial Congress Committees. I have to admit with regret that both in Bihar and Bombay, the Congress did not come out fully successful in its test of nationalism." [p. 16]

The Case of a Parsee, Mr. Nariman in Bombay

The first was the case of Mr. Nariman, a Parsee and an acknowledged leader of the local Congress in Bombay, who was generally expected to lead the provincial government. Sardar Patel and his colleagues could not reconcile with such a leadership of non-Hindu Chief Minister where "the majority of members in the Congress Assembly Party were Hindus." [p. 16] Thus, a Hindu leader was presented, instead of Mr. Nariman.

"Mr. Nariman was naturally upset about the decision. He raised the question before the Congress Working Committee. Jawaharlal was then President and many hoped that in view of his complete freedom from communal bias; he would rectify the injustice to Nariman. Unfortunately this did not happen. ... He [Jawaharlal] sought to placate Patel and rejected Nariman's appeal. ... Nariman was surprised at Jawaharlal's attitude, especially as Jawaharlal treated him harshly and tried to shout him down in the meeting of the Working Committee." [p. 16-17]

Nariman decided to take the case to Gandhiji. But the ploy and cunning of Sardar Patel and his colleagues were such that:

> *"Nariman had lost the case even before the enquiry began. It was finally held that nothing was proven against Sardar Patel. None who knew the inner story was satisfied with this verdict. We all know that truth has been sacrificed in order to satisfy Sardar Patel's communal demands. Poor Nariman was heart broken and his public life came to an end." [p. 17]*

The Case of a Muslim: Dr. Syed Mahmud in Bihar

> *"A similar development took place in Bihar. Dr. Syed Mahmud was the top leader of the province when the elections were held. He was also a General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee and as such he had a position both inside and outside the province. When the Congress secured an absolute majority, it was taken for granted that Dr. Syed Mahmud would be elected the leader and become the first Chief Minister of Bihar under Provincial Autonomy. Instead, Sri Krishna Sinha and Anugraha Narayan Sinha who were members of the Central Assembly, were called back to Bihar and groomed for the Chief Ministership. Dr. Rajendra Prasad played the same role in Bihar as Sardar Patel did in Bombay." [p. 17]*

> *"These two instances left a bad taste at the time. Looking back, I cannot help feeling that the Congress did not live up to its professed ideals. One has to admit with regret that the nationalism of the Congress had not then reached a stage where it could ignore communal considerations and select leaders on the basis of merit without regard to majority or minority." [p. 18]*

Muslim League was already doing its part, purportedly on behalf of the Muslims. It is noteworthy that Muslim League and the majority of Muslim mass of India were not quite closely identified with each other at that point. But those two above mentioned cases set the backdrop of Azad's account in IWF, where certain powerful elements in the Congress contributed their due communal part in gradually alienating the Muslim mass and their opinion.

THE FIRST SEED OF PARTITION

C. R. Das: An Example of Non-Communal Leadership

> *"As I reflect on the treatment meted out to Mr. Nariman and Dr. Syed Mahmud, my mind goes back to Mr. C. R. Das, one of the most powerful personalities thrown up by the non-cooperation movement. Mr. Das occupies a very special position in the history of our national struggle. He was a man of great vision and breadth of imagination. At the same time he had a practical mind which looked at every question from the point of view of a realist. He had the courage of his convictions and stood up fearlessly for any position he regarded to be right." [IWF, p. 18]*

> *"Mr. C.R. Das used to discuss the situation with me almost every day. He was convinced that Gandhiji had erred grievously in calling off the [non-cooperation] movement. This had so demoralised political workers that it would take many years before public enthusiasm could again be roused." [p. 21]*

During this phase, there was a major difference of opinion in the Congress camp. Should there be participation in the political process or resumption of non-cooperation? Mr. C.R. Das became elected as the President.

> *"The decision of the Delhi Congress was that pro-changers and no-changers should be free to pursue their own programmes. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shri Rajagopalachari and their associates took up the constructive program. Mr. C.R. Das, Pandit Motilal and Hakim Ajmal Khan founded the Swaraj Party and decided to contest the elections. Their move created great enthusiasm throughout the country. In all the Provincial as well as in the General Assembly, the Swaraj Party won a very large following." [pp. 22-23]*

Bengal Enters the Picture

Muslims of Bengal firmly supported the Swaraj Party. Mr. Das' visionary leadership recognized that Muslims were the majority in Bengal, and yet grossly underrepresented. His bold decision shocked many leaders of Bengal Congress. They opposed him and his views, but finally yielded to his plan. Muslims of

Bengal were swayed toward his leadership. But his untimely death was a blow to this nascent rapprochement. The effect was that "the first seed of partition was sowed"; it was sowed in Bengal, and by the communal Hindu leaders of Bengal Congress. How did Muslim League ultimately win over the Muslims of Bengal? Well, the Muslim League effectively presented the actual conditions of the Muslims of Bengal to make its case; the communal role of Hindu-dominated Bengal Congress played its part.

> *"I have said that the Swaraj Party won a large following in the Central as well as the Provincial Legislatures. Perhaps its most remarkable achievement was its success in capturing seats reserved for Muslims. The electorates were communal and only Muslim voters returned Muslim legislators. The Muslim League and other communal parties were therefore able to play upon the fears of the Muslims and generally returned candidates with communal leanings. Mr. Das was able to overcome the fears and apprehensions of the Muslims of Bengal and was acclaimed their leader. The way he solved the communal problem of Bengal is memorable and should serve as an example even today.*
>
> *In Bengal, Muslims were the majority community but for various reasons they were educationally and politically, backward. They had hardly any place in public life or Government service. Even though they numbered over 50 per cent of the population, they held hardly 30 per cent of the posts under the Government. Mr C.R. Das was a great realist and immediately saw that the problem was an economic one. He realised that till the Muslims were given the necessary assurances for their economic future they could not be expected to join the Congress wholeheartedly. He therefore made a declaration which took not only Bengal but India by surprise. He announced that when Congress secured the reins of power in Bengal, it would reserve 60 per cent of all new appointments for the Muslims till such time as they achieved proper representation according to population. He went even further in respect of the Calcutta Corporation and offered to reserve 80 per cent of the new appointments on similar terms. He pointed out that so long as the Muslims were not properly represented in public life and in the services, there could be no true democracy in Bengal. Once the inequalities had been rectified, Muslims would be able to compete on equal terms with other communities and there would be no need for any special reservation.*
>
> *This bold announcement shook the Bengal Congress to its very foundations. Many of the Congress leaders violently opposed it and started a campaign against Mr. Das. He was accused of opportunism and even partisanship for the Muslims but he stood solid as a rock. He toured the whole province and explained his point of view to Muslims and Hindus alike. The strength and sincerity of his purpose was such that ultimately the Bengal Congress was converted to his point of view. His attitude made a great impression on Muslims in Bengal and outside. I am convinced that if he had not died a premature death, he would have created a new atmosphere in the country. It is a matter for regret that after he died, some of his followers assailed his position and his declaration was repudiated. The result was that the Muslims of Bengal moved away from the Congress and the FIRST SEED OF PARTITION WAS SOWN. [pp. 23-24]*

A Muslim Leadership in Congress Stands Firm against Communalism

When Congress established the government, Maulana Azad was in charge of the parliamentary affairs in several provinces that suffered communal troubles. His non-communal role balanced the tendencies of Hindu communal forces and improved the situation considerably toward better Congress-Muslims relationship. But "the first seed of partition" was already sown, and according to Maulana Azad as explained above, it was due to the communal role of certain Hindu leaders.

> *"I must however make one fact clear. The Provincial Congress Committees of Bihar and Bombay erred in denying local leadership to Dr Syed Mahmud and Mr Nariman, and the Working Committee was not strong enough to rectify the wrong. Apart from this one lapse, Congress made every effort to live up to its principles. Once the Ministries were formed, every effort was made to ensure justice to all minorities.*
>
> *When Congress accepted office, a Parliamentary Board was formed to supervise the work of the Ministries and give them general guidance on policy. The Board consisted of Sardar Patel,*

Dr Rajendra Prasad and myself. I was thus in charge of the Parliamentary affairs in several Provinces, viz., Bengal, Bihar, UP, Punjab, Sind and the Frontier. Every incident which involved communal issues came up before me. From personal knowledge and with a full sense of responsibility, I can therefore say that the charges leveled by Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League about injustice to Muslims and other minorities were absolutely false. If there has been an iota of truth in any of these charges, I would have seen to it that the injustice was rectified. I was prepared even to resign if necessary on an issue like this." [pp. 24-25]

THE BAD BRITISH HABIT

The Cripps Mission

In the early 1940s, the Allied power as well as the British government were anxious to see India engaged in the world war. Congress and the Indian leadership were deferring any definitive commitment because leaders, such as Maulana Azad, insisted on reaching an explicit and categorical agreement with the British government in regard to the independence of India after the war was over. It was in this context the Cripps Mission, led by Sir Stafford Cripps, arrived in India in 1942.

Maulana Azad Helps the Nationalist Muslims

The British were yet to acknowledge Muslims as a community. Maulana Azad had some role in the background in facilitating a positive change in that regard.

"Before coming to India, Sir Stafford Cripps had written to the Viceroy that he would like to meet, besides the leaders of the Congress the leaders of the Muslim League also. In addition, he would like to meet representatives of the Princes, the Hindu Mahashabha and Khan Bahadur Allah Bux, then Chief Minister of Sind. Khan Bahadur Allah Bux had attained importance in recent months after presiding over the Convention of the Nationalist Muslims in Delhi. I did not participate in this Conference but from behind the scenes I had helped in the arrangements. The Conference was held with great ?at and 1,400 delegates came to Delhi from all quarters of India. The

session was so impressive that even the British and the Anglo-Indian press, which normally tried to belittle the importance of nationalist Muslims, could not ignore it. They were compelled to acknowledge that this Conference proved that nationalist Muslims were not a negligible factor. Even the Statesman and the Times of India wrote leading articles on the Conference." [pp. 48-49]

Oh, the British were Gentlemen - with Some Bad Habits

The British tended to build or break different groups, parties, individuals as they found it convenient. Even Muslim League with no significant clout initially was given patronage by the British government to counter the rise and power of the Congress. This is a bad habit of all those at the helm of power to pursue the policy of "divide and rule." The British were exceptionally good at this bad habit.

"It is interesting to consider why the British Government wanted to consult the representatives of so many bodies in India. It was well known that Congress spoke for the vast majority of the Indian people. It is true the Muslim League had gained considerable influence among a section of the Muslims, but this was largely due to the support which the Government had extended to it. As for the other parties, they were almost entirely the creations of the Government. If the British Government came to a settlement with Congress, they had neither the strength and courage nor perhaps the inclination to oppose. The only reason for inviting all such parties to meet Sir Stafford was to use them as possible counterweights to Congress. The British Government wanted to inform the world outside that there were many parties in India and Congress could not speak for the whole country. The British also perhaps felt that it this way they could exert some pressure on Congress. It was in this context that Cripps felt he ought to invite the President of the Nationalist Muslim Convention when he was meeting leaders of other Indian parties." [p. 49]

Naughty, Naughty? Or, Nasty, Nasty?

Understandably, then, the well publicized Cripps Mission lost its luster before long.

"... as the negotiations continued, the early mood of confidence and optimism was gradually dissipated.

There were other reasons also for a change in the mood and atmosphere. I have already said that before Sir Stafford came to India, he had asked the Viceroy to issue invitations to a number of political leaders of whom one was the late Mr. Allah Bux. After arriving in India, Cripps appeared to modify his stand, perhaps as a result of the influence of the Viceregal House. Allah Bux had come to Delhi on the Viceroy's invitation and was waiting for an interview with Sir Stafford but the interview was not being fixed. As this was creating an awkward situation. I spoke to Cripps and he said that he would soon invite Allah Bux. In spite of this promise, no invitation was actually issued. Allah Bux at last got disgusted and said he refused to wait in Delhi any longer. When I heard this, I spoke strongly to Sir Stafford and pointed out that this was an insult not only to Allah Bux but to the strong body of Muslims whom he represented. If Cripps had any doubts on the points, Allah Bux should not have been invited at all. But since the invitation had been issued, he should be properly met. My intervention resulted in an interview between Sir Stafford and Allah Bux the next day. The interview was for only an hour and was confined to general discussions. Cripps did not touch the root of the problem.

This incident created a bad impression on me. I felt that this was not the proper method of dealing with difficult political issues. In my judgment, Cripps had not behaved like a statesman. The invitations should not have been issues without consulting the Government of India. Even if there were difficulties, he should have pointed them out to Allah Bux in a straightforward manner and not kept him cooling his heels in Delhi." [pp. 55-56]

Playing "Muslims against Hindus" Game

It is too well known a game to elaborate. The British gentlemen did there part in fostering and using the communal card in the unfolding events in India.

"There was another incident which left me with a disagreeable taste. As soon as the press released the text of the War Cabinet's proposals, there was a large volume of criticism in the Indian press. The most critical were the papers which generally expressed the Congress point of view. Hindustan Times of Delhi was one of those which was frankest in the expression of opinion. While the Congress Working Committee was still in session, Cripps sent me a letter in which he said that though the Hindu press had not welcomed the offer, he hoped that I would consider the proposal from a broader point of view. This reference to the Hindu press appeared very odd to me. It also occurred to me that perhaps he was putting the emphasis on the Hindu press because I am a Muslim. If he did not like the comments made by the press, he could easily have referred to the Indian press or a section of it. I replied that I was surprised at his reference to the Hindu press and did not think that there was any justification for drawing such a distinction among the different sections of the Indian press. I assured him that the Congress Working Committee would consider the proposals only from an Indian point of view and it would take into consideration all sections of opinion before it came to decision." [pp. 56-57]

THE RISE OF MUSLIM LEAGUE AND QUAID-E-AZAM

Bengal and the Origin of the Muslim League

First a misperception. Where did Muslim League originate? About Muslim League and its repudiated and rejected stances in our contemporary times, many may harbor the notion that Muslim League was a non-Bangali, Pakistani, or West Pakistani phenomenon. Not exactly. The root and origin of the Muslim League are traceable to Bengal. More specifically, to Dhaka in East Bengal that became East Pakistan first and, subsequently, Bangladesh.

"The Muslim League was established in 1906 in Dacca after the session of the Muslim Educational Conference during Christmas. It owed its origin to the efforts of Nawab Mushtaq Husain. I was present at the session and remember the two reasons advanced for the establishment of the League. It was said that one of the objects of the League would be to strengthen and develop a feeling of loyalty to the British Government among the Muslims of India. The second object was to advance

the claims of the Muslims against Hindus and other communities in respect of service under the crown and thus safeguard Muslim interests and rights. The leaders of the League were therefore naturally opposed to the demand for political independence raised by the Congress. They felt that if the Muslims joined in any such demand the British would not support their claims for special treatment in education and service. In fact they described the Congress as a disloyal organisation of rebels and regarded even moderate political leaders like Gokhale or Sir Ferozeshah Mehta as extremists. During this phase the British Government always used the Muslim League as a counter to the demands of the Congress." [p. 117]

This is important for several reasons. First, at least, Bangladeshis need to recognize and understand that Muslim League was one of its own - a homespun party or organization. Second, if Maulana Azad's account is accurate, then Muslim League was originally not a progressive force specifically for seeking independence from the British. However, advancing the general interest of Muslims while facing opposition from the Hindus was one of its primary goals. Third, its modus operandi was basically to patronize the British rule so that the British, in return, would patronize Muslims. I am not certain about complete accuracy of Maulana Azad's contextual characterization of Muslim League's origin. However, I have not checked other pertinent works, and I am presenting herein mainly [otherwise, too many ?basically?] Maulana Azad's account. Fourth, it was the leaders from Bengal who founded Muslim League; people like Quaid-e-Azam (the Great Leader) was hardly any Quaid (leader) yet, let alone Quaid-e-Azam.

Phases of Muslim League

Muslim League took a while to begin to represent the entire Muslim community; it was not easy because there were key Muslim leaders, with solid support from Muslims, involved with Congress.

"The Muslim League entered into the second phase of its activities when it found that the Government was compelled to introduce some reforms as a result of Congress pressure. It was somewhat disturbed when it saw the Congress achieving its object step by step. The League still remained aloof from the political struggle but as soon as any advance was made, it put in a claim on behalf of the Muslim community. This programme of the Muslim League suited the Government well. In fact there are reasons to think that the League was acting according to the wishes of the British. During the Morley-Minto Reforms as well as the Montford scheme of provincial autonomy, this was the attitude adopted by the League.

Then came the third phase in the League's programme during World War II. Congress had gained immensely in prestige and strength. It was now clear that the British Government would have to recognise Indian freedom. Mr. Jinnah had now become the leader of the Muslim League and felt that he must take advantage of every difference between the Congress and the Government. Whenever there were discussions between the Congress and the Government for the transfer of power, Mr Jinnah would in the beginning remain silent. If the negotiations failed he issued a milk and water statement condemning both parties and saying that since there was no settlement there was no need for the Muslim League to express any opinion on the British offer. This is what he did during the August offer in 1940 and the Cripps proposals of 1942. The Simla Conference presented him with a new situation that he had never faced before." [p. 118]

India faced two major issues in dealing with the British. First, the independence of India and second, the communal issue. Based on the ideas of Lord Wavell, important breakthrough was achieved at the Simla conference. Maulana Azad was able to persuade the Congress Working Committee to accept Lord Wavell's plan, which consisted of the idea that the British would decisively tackle the issue of Indian independence after the war.

In the mean time, with India on the allied/British side, there would be preparation for the independent India, with the Indians taking charge of the governance of India. Although this was the first successful negotiation with the British regarding the political issue of independence, the Simla Conference got stalled on the communal issue.

"Now that the political issue between India and Britain seemed on the point of solution, the Conference broke down over the question of communal representation in the new Executive Council.

... Congress had taken a national stand on this question while the Muslim League demanded that the Congress should give up its national character and function as a communal organization. Mr Jinnah took the strange stand that the Congress could nominate only Hindu members of the Executive Council. I asked the Conference what right Mr Jinnah or the Muslim League to dictate whom the Congress should nominate." [pp. 118-119]

Gandhi's Role in Propping up Quaid-e-Azam

Although Muslim League originated in Dhaka (Bengal) and Bangali Muslim leaders continued to perform a vital role, gradually, as it emerged, Dhaka was no longer the center of Muslim League's struggle. The case of the top leadership was also comparable. In three decades since its inception, Non-Bangali leaders living outside of Bengal took charge of Muslim League. To a host of factors, Gandhiji?s contribution receives a notable mention.

"For some time after his release, Gandhiji was too ill to take any effective step. He was for some months under treatment but as soon as he felt a little better, he initiated a number of political moves. Two of them deserve special mention. Gandhiji made a fresh attempt for an understanding with the Muslim League and arranged to meet Mr Jinnah. His second move was an attempt to open fresh negotiation with the Government. Contrary to his previous declarations, he now issued a statement that if India were declared free, she would voluntarily side with the British and give full support to the war effort. I was completely taken aback and knew that both these actions were doomed to failure.

I think Gandhiji's approach to Mr Jinnah on this occasion was a great political blunder. It gave a new and added importance to Mr .Jinnah which he later exploited fully Gandhiji had in fact adopted a peculiar attitude to Jinnah from the very beginning. Jinnah had lost much of his political importance after he left the Congress in the twenties.

It was largely due to Gandhiji's acts of commission and omission that Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life. In fact, it is doubtful if Jinnah could have ever achieved supremacy but for Gandhiji's attitude. Large sections of Indian Muslims were doubtful about Mr Jinnah and his policy but when they found that Gandhiji was continually running after him and entreating him, many of them developed a new respect for Jinnah. They also thought that Jinnah was perhaps the best man for getting advantageous terms in the communal settlement.

I may mention here that it was Gandhiji who first gave currency to the title Qaid-e-Azam or great leader as applied to Mr Jinnah. Gandhiji had in his camp a foolish but well intentioned woman called Amtus Salam. She had seen in some Urdu papers a reference to Jinnah as Qaid-e-Azam.

When Gandhiji was writing to Jinnah asking for an interview, she told him that the Urdu papers called Jinnah Qaid-i-Azam and he should use the same form of address. Without pausing to consider the implications of his action, Gandhiji addressed Jinnah as Qaid-i-Azam. This letter was soon after published in the press. When Indian Muslims saw that Gandhiji also addressed Jinnah as Qaid-i-Azam, they felt that he must really be so. When in July 1944, I read the report that Gandhiji was corresponding with Jinnah and going to Bombay to meet him, I told my colleagues that Gandhiji was making a great mistake. His action would not help to solve but on the contrary aggravate the Indian political situation. Later events proved that my apprehensions were correct. Jinnah exploited the situation fully and built up his own position but he did not say or do anything which could in any way help the cause of Indian freedom." [pp. 96-97]

JINNAH PLAYS THE COMMUNAL CARD

India Insists on it Independence to Join WWII

The British sought India's assistance in the WWII. Congress, under the leadership of Maulana Azad, stayed firm in its position that India's independence issue must be resolved. In response to a reporter's question, Maulana Azad responded:

"... if India were assured of her freedom, she would join the war voluntarily. Our first duty then would be to mobilise total national effort and we would support conscription.

I reminded the correspondent of a statement I had made as early as 1940 as the President of the Indian National Congress. I had declared that if India's political problem was solved, she would not only join the war of her own free will but also adopt conscription and send every able-bodied young man to the war front. I had then also said that our offer was not merely to live but also die for democracy. It was a pity, I added, that the British did not give us the opportunity of dying with honour and my offer was repudiated." [p. 109]

The British Mood Seemed Thawed, But ...

"On 14 June 1945, Mr L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, made a statement in the House of Commons in which he declared that full scope would be given to India to decide about the war as a free nation. Asked further whether the leaders of the Indian National Congress would be allowed to run the government, Mr. Amery said that they were asking the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League to form the Government. The Congress would thus have full freedom to choose any representative they liked including Maulana Azad and Pandit Nehru.

This statement created the general impression in India that at last the Indian political problem was about to be solved. The people felt that there was [no] reason now why Congress should not accept the offer." [pp. 109-110]

No Substantive Change in British Position

Discussion with the British Viceroy Lord Wavell revealed that the new British position it was not much different from the past, except the atmosphere.

"The Viceroy then described to me the details of his proposal. My first reaction was that it was not different in substance from the Cripps offer. There was however one material difference in the circumstances. The Cripps offer was made when the British were in dire need of Indian cooperation. Today the war was over

in Europe and the Allies had triumphed over Hitler. The British Government had all the same repeated their earlier offer in an attempt to create a new political atmosphere in India. ... I assured Lord Wavell that my endeavour would be to find a solution and not create difficulties.

I was impressed by the frankness and sincerity of the Viceroy as he described the proposals to me. I saw that his attitude was not that of a politician but of a soldier. ... My interview with Lord Wavell created a new atmosphere in Simla.

Jinnah and Muslim League Play the Communal Card

At Simla Conference, whereat an important political breakthrough was achieved, Jinnah threw a monkey wrench. While the proposal of Jinnah/Muslim League as an advocate of two-nations theory was understandable, the outcome was also predictable: Congress as a party with substantial Muslim support, especially with Muslim leadership like Maulana Azad, could not be expected to accept it.

"Soon after the Conference began, the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League came out into the open. By the second day, the Conference had agreed on certain main principles like representation for minorities, wholehearted support to the war effort and continuance of the reconstituted Executive Council under the Government of India Act till the end of the war. Difference however arose about the composition of the Executive Council. Mr Jinnah's demand was that Congress could nominate all the Hindu members but all the Muslim members must be nominees of the League. I pointed out that Congress could never accept such a demand. It had approached all political problems from a national point of view and recognised no distinction between Hindus and Muslims on political issues. It could not in any circumstances agree to be an organisation of Hindus alone. I therefore insisted that the Congress should have the freedom to nominate any Indian it liked regardless of whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Parsi or a Sikh. Congress should participate on the basis of Indian nationhood or not participate at all. So far as the Muslim League was concerned, it was for it to decide who should be its nominees." [p. 116]

Political Breakthrough at Simla Conference

India so far had to confront two difficult aspects of its independence. One, political, and the other, communal. Simla conference of 1945 was the first breakthrough regarding the political resolution.

> *"The Simla Conference marks a breakwater in Indian political history. This was the first time when negotiations failed, but on the basic political issue between India and Britain, but on the communal issue dividing different Indian groups." [p. 117]*
>
> *"As I have said earlier all discussions between the Congress and the Government had till now failed on political issues. The Congress was not ready to accept any solution which did not ensure Indian freedom. Discussions had therefore failed on political issues and never reached the communal question. In the Simla Conference, I was able to persuade the Congress Working Committee to accept Lord Wavell's offer. Now that the political issue between India and Britain seemed on the point of solution, the Conference broke down over the question of communal representation in the new Executive Council." [pp. 118-119]*

The British are Good at Creating Problems, but not at Facilitating Solutions

> *"I asked Lord Wavell to say in categorical terms whether the stand of the Muslims League could be regarded as reasonable.*
>
> *Lord Wavell did not give a direct reply, but the purport of what he said was that he could not accept the stand of the Muslim League as reasonable. At the same time he said that this was a matter which should be decided between the Congress and the Muslim League and it would not be proper for either the Government or for himself as an individual to force a decision on either party." [p. 119]*

Wow! The British knowing and caring for what is proper, especially about not forcing a decision on either party?

The colonial rule was not forced upon India (rather was based on the consent of India and the love for the British), wasn't it? Well, the British knew when being decisive helped their own

cause and when appearing neutral or being indecisive worked equally suitably.

A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY ARISES

The British, as Usual, Played along the Communal Game

Simla conference failed as Jinnah/Muslim League, as pursuant to Two-Nations Theory, played the communal game. The British, as usual, played along, even though it was clear to all parties that such major problem could not be solved without the appropriate input of the colonial power that had ruled and rubbled up the whole society, retaining only the colonial interest in mind. After the Simla Conference, Maulana Azad issued a statement, in which he emphasized the following.

> *"The British Government cannot absolve themselves of the responsibility for the communal problems here. Whether it is today or tomorrow, they must take up a firm stand on a just and fair basis." [p. 123]*

India Holds a General Election

With an election manifesto that envisioned "a free, democratic State with the fundamental rights and civil liberties of all its citizens guaranteed in the constitution," the Congress "achieved an overwhelming victory in all provinces EXCEPT BENGAL, Punjab and Sind." [pp. 130, 132]

The passion for independence from the British colonial rule was powering up. Observing no concrete movement toward that final goal, "demonstrations were held in different parts of India. In Calcutta, there was violence during some of these demonstrations. In Delhi, the people tried to set fire to Government buildings and destroyed public property." [p. 144]

The British Cabinet Mission

As of February 1946, Maulana Azad provides an account of the political situation in India, especially the changed spirit on the British side.

> *"It was clear to me that the country had undergone a complete transformation. An absolutely new India has been born. The people, whether officials or non-officials, were fired with a new*

desire for freedom. There was also a change of spirit on the British side." [p. 145]

It was in this atmosphere that the British government announced in the British Parliament that it is going to send a "Cabinet Mission to India to discuss with the representatives of India the question of Indian freedom." [p. 145] There was an acknowledgement of mutual wrongdoing on the part of the British as well.

"He [i.e., Lord Attlee] admitted that there had been faults on both sides and added that they should now look to the future rather than harp on the past. He explained that it was no good applying the formulas of the past to the present situation, for the temper of 1946 was not the temper of 1920, 1930 or even 1942. He went on to say that he did not wish to stress on the differences between the Indians, for in spite of all differences between the Indians, united in their desire for freedom." [p. 146]

The Muslim Anxiety

Like everyone else, Maulana Azad himself was keenly aware of the concerns of Muslims, as he tried all the way to the end to seek India's freedom as an undivided India.

"The Simla Conference has convinced me that the political question had reached a stage of settlement. The communal differences were still unresolved. ONE THING NOBODY COULD DENY. As a community, the Muslims were extremely anxious about their future. It is true they were in a clear majority in certain provinces. At the provincial level they had therefore no fears in these areas. They were however a minority in India as a whole and were troubled by the fear that their position and status in independent India would not be secure." [p. 147]

Maulana Azad, as an Indian Muslim, Rises to the Challenge

How to retain India's integrity, while addressing the anxiety and concerns of Muslims? The entire Congress leadership struggled with this issue of resolving the communal problems. Maulana Azad rose to the occasion, which was embraced by the Congress leadership and Gandhi.

"I gave continuous and anxious thought to this subject. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that the Constitution of India must from the nature of the case be federal. Further, it must be so framed as to ensure COMPLETE AUTONOMY to the provinces in as many subjects as possible. We had to reconcile the claims of provincial autonomy with national unity. This could be done by finding a satisfactory formula for the distribution of powers and functions between the Central and the Provincial Government. Some powers and functions could be essentially central, others essentially provincial and some which could be either provincially or centrally exercised by consent. The first step was to devise a formula by which a minimum number of subjects should be declared as essentially the responsibility of the Central Government.

... The more I thought about the matter, the clearer it became to me that the Indian problem could not be solved on any other basis. If a Constitution was framed which embodied this principle, it would ensure that in the Muslim majority provinces, all subjects except those three (i.e., defence, communication and foreign affairs) could be administered by the province itself. This would eliminate from the mind of the Muslims all fears of domination by the Hindus. Once such fears were allayed, it was likely that the provinces would find it an advantage to delegate some other subjects as well to the Central Government." [pp. 147-148]

"The Working Committee (of Congress) was initially somewhat sceptical about the solution and members raised all kinds of difficulties and doubts. I was able to meet their objections and clarified doubtful points. Finally the Working Committee was convinced about the soundness of the proposal and Gandhiji expressed his complete agreement with the solution.

Gandhiji in fact complimented me by saying that I had found a solution of a problem which had till then baffled everybody. He said that my solution would allay the fear of even the most communal among the Muslim Leaguers and at the same time it was inspired by a national and not a sectional outlook." [p. 149]

The Ball Rolls into Jinnah's/Muslim League's Court

Congress and Gandhi were on board as far as Maulana Azad's suggestion was concerned. How did the Muslim League react?

> *"The Muslim League had for the first time spoken of a possible division of India in its Lahore Resolution. ... The solution I suggested was intended to meet the fears of the Muslim League. Now that I had discussed my scheme with my colleagues and members of the Cabinet Mission, I felt that the time had come to place it before the country. Accordingly on 15 April 1946, I issues a statement dealing with the demands of Muslims and other minorities." [pp. 149-150]*

Dr. Bain referred to this rather lengthy statement while quoting Maulana Azad in regard to his position on the Two Nations Theory and its ramifications, and why division of India with India and Pakistan as two separate entities would be worse for Muslims themselves.

Muslim League vacillated over the scheme articulated by Maulana Azad and later ratified by Congress. Even the Cabinet Mission was on board with the scheme. Muslim League's Lahore Resolution was somewhat vague and it was time for Jinnah and Muslims League to take some more specific position.

> *"At first Mr. Jinnah was completely opposed to the scheme. The Muslim League had gone so far in its demand for a separate independent state that it was difficult for it to retrace its steps. The Mission had stated in clear and unambiguous terms that they could never recommend the partition of the country and the formation of an independent state. ...[T]hey could not see how a state like the Pakistan envisaged by the Muslim League could be viable and stable.*
>
> *... The Muslim League Council met for three days before it could come to a decision. On the final day, Mr. Jinnah had to admit that there could be no fairer solution of the minority problem than that presented in the Cabinet Mission Plan. In any case, he could not get better terms. He told the Council that the scheme presented by the Cabinet Mission was the maximum that we could secure. As such, HE ADVISED THE MUSLIM LEAGUE TO ACCEPT THE SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN ITS FAVOR." [p. 157]*

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